University of Alberta

"Selected Alpine Climbs": The Struggle for Mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies, 1886-1961

by

Zachary Bass Robinson ©

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of the major contending interests in mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies during the years between 1886 and 1961, with particular attention to the influence of the changes in the balance of power as different social agents and groups sought to influence and control the values and practices that mountaineering privilege and the rewards and status it confers. These power relations and the social struggles they have created within mountaineering, as in all areas of social life, have occupied a central role in the meaning, organization, and practice of the sport. Accounts printed in the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, the annually-published organ of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), provide a unique opportunity to reflect upon the tensions and conflicts that existed within mountaineering culture, and the ways in which these were articulated and resolved by assembling contradictory cultural elements into what sociologist David Robbins called, "teeth gritting harmony." The emergence of cultural forms and/or practices counter to the dominant institutionalized interests of the ACC—the "unmanly" ascent of Mt. Robson in 1909, for example, or the "unrespectable" commodification of skiing during the 1910s and 1920s, certainly the "fanatical" rock-climbing practices of the 1950s—forced the amateur proselytizers of mountaineering into a dynamic state of readjustment, one of appropriation and *ex*-propriation, particularly when such pressures called into question the balance of social order and threaten its legitimacy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION
"Selected Alpine Climbs" 1

CHAPTER ONE
The Golden Years of Mountaineering in Canada: Ethics, Form, and Style, 1886-1925 17

CHAPTER TWO
Storming the Heights: Canadian Frontier Nationalism and the Making of Manhood in the Conquest for Mount Robson, 1906-1913 49

CHAPTER THREE
Canada's Everest? The Politics of Nationhood and the First Ascent of Mount Logan, 1925 85

CHAPTER FOUR
Off the Beaten Path? Ski Mountaineering and the Weight of Tradition in the Canadian Rockies, 1909-1940 120

CHAPTER FIVE
"How Steep is Steep?" The Struggle for Mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies, 1948-1961 157

EPILOGUE
At the Foot of the Mountain 193

LIST OF SOURCES 203

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 The cover of Sean Dougherty's *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (1991) 3

Figure 2 The east face of Mount Alberta from Woolley Shoulder. Photograph, August 2003. 35

Figure 3 Frontispiece featuring Mt. Alberta from the southwest in J. Monroe Thorington and Howard Palmer's guidebook, *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (1921). 37

Figure 4 The 1925 Japanese expedition at Jasper Park Lodge just before it set out for Mt. Alberta. Photograph, July 1925. 40

Figure 5 The inaugural meeting of The Alpine Club of Canada in Winnipeg. Photograph, March 1906. 59

Figure 6 The southwest face of Mount Robson. Photograph, July 2006. 63

Figure 7 The Robson Glacier. Photograph, August 2002. 64

Figure 8 Donald "Curly" Phillips and Rev. George Kinney at the Moberly homestead. Photograph, June 1909. 68

Figure 9 The northwest bowl of Mount Robson. Photograph, August 2002. 79

Figure 10 Donald "Curly" Phillips. Photograph. 82

Figure 11 George Kinney. Photograph. 83

Figure 12 1925 Approach to Mount Logan. Sketch Map. 101

Figure 13 Members of the 1925 expedition to Mount Logan at McCarthy, Alaska. Photograph, May 1925. 103

Figure 14 Map illustrating the approach taken to Mount Logan by the 1925 expedition, as it was in the 1925 *CAJ*. 105

Figure 15 Map illustrating the camps used by the 1925 expedition on Mount Logan, as it was in the 1925 *CAJ*. 108

Figure 16 The summit plateau of Mount Logan. Photograph, June 2003. 110

Figure 16 Group in poor condition at Prospector's Col, as seen in the 1925

CAJ. Photograph, June 1925. 113

Figure 17 Conrad Kain jumping on Tunnel Mountain. Photograph, 1910. 129

Figure 18 Ski Jump Competition on Tunnel Mountain, Banff Winter Carnival. Photograph, ca. 1920s. 137

Figure 19 Skier at Mount Norquay Ski Camp. Photograph, 1928. 139

Figure 20 The View from Assiniboine Lodge. Photograph, ca. 1930s. 140

Figure 21 Cliff White on Snow Dome. Photograph, March 1932. 148

Figure 22 The Mount Schaffer Avalanche. Photograph, January 1938. 152

Figure 23 The Northeast Ridge of Brussels Peak. Photograph, August 2006. 165

Figure 24 The south face of Yamnuska from the southwest. Photograph, September 2003. 174

Figure 25 On the summit of Mount Alberta. Photograph, August 1958. 185

Figure 26 The front cover of the *CAJ* 67 (1984). 197

Figure 27 Climbers at Grassi Lakes. Photograph, August 2006. 200

Figure 28 Pictograph at Grassi Lakes. Photograph August, 2006. 201

INTRODUCTION

"Selected Alpine Climbs"

> *I remain possessed by stories and obsessed with their complex uses.*[1]
>
> Stephen Greenblatt

I remember the day that I purchased a copy of Sean Dougherty's guidebook, *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (1991).[2] Stung by the inflated tourist prices of Lake Louise, I bought it from the village bookstore just before heading north with friends up the Icefields Parkway, one of the world's great scenic highways, which transects Banff and Jasper national parks south-to-north along the eastern slopes of the Continental Divide. The careful engineering of the road, and the generous provision of stopping places, viewpoints, and interpretive information, allowed the sublime scale and wonderful variety of mountain scenery to be fully appreciated.[3] Yet, on that particular morning, I was no more interested in the view from the road than I was in reciting our objectives for the next day, my first mountaineering trip. Sitting in the back of van amid the piles of gear and duffels, I was wholly captivated by *the book*, its descriptions and pictures of the notorious routes that I had come to know through stories in climbing magazines and little-known periodicals: the crux section of the *Andromeda Strain* adorned its front cover (see Fig. 1), the North Face of Alberta its title page, the routes up Robson's Emperor and North Face on the back....

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[1] Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 1.

[2] Sean Dougherty, *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1991).

There is an interesting point of comparison in contemplating scenic parkways, protected areas, and guidebooks, one that brings to view the essential reality about landscapes: that our responses to them are predominantly culturally produced. By ascribing qualities—splendour, for example, or majesty—to the physical land, it becomes fundamentally "cultured" and is valued accordingly.[4] Seen through the cultured gaze, physical land is thus transformed into landscapes, a term, not coincidentally, associated with the genre of artistic pictorial representations of nature. For British historian Simon Schama, "landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock."[5] Mountains, after all, are merely contingencies of geology. They do not deliberately please, nor do they intentionally kill: any meaningful properties they hold are vested in them by human imagination, experience, power, and language. To abuse an old climbing adage, mountains *are* simply "there," and there they remain, their physical structures shaped gradually throughout time by geological processes and weather.[6] Simultaneously, however, they are products of human perception and have been imagined, and reimagined, into existence throughout history. Indeed, climbing mountains has numerous histories. Through its selections, my

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[3] Alexander Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991), 19.

[4] Robert MacFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: Adventures in Reaching the Summit* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 18.

[5] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Toronto: Random House, 1995), 7.

[6] When asked why he wanted to climb Mount Everest in 1923, the famed British mountaineer George Mallory cryptically replied, "because it is there," a phrase that has passed beyond the realm of

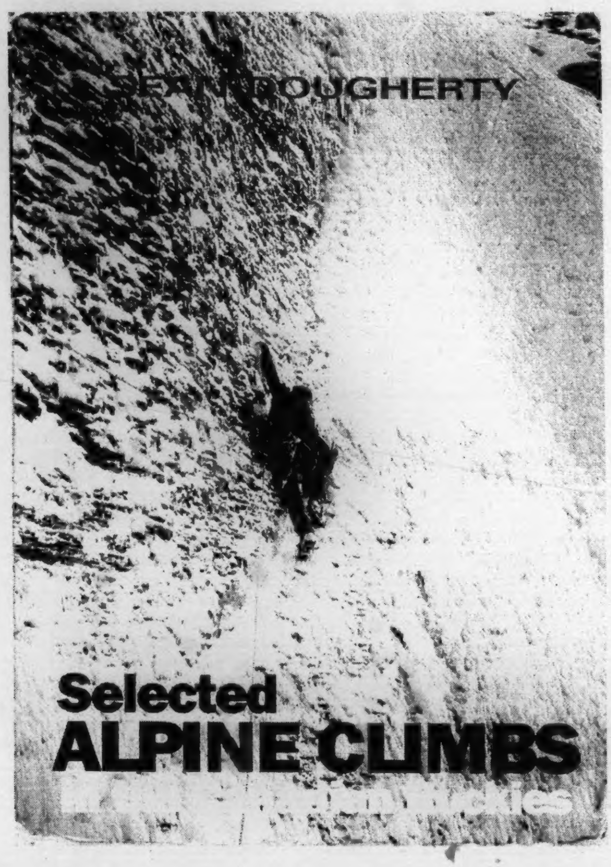

Fig. 1 The cover of Sean Dougherty's *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (1991) featuring a photograph of a climber leading the exit ice bulge on the *Andromeda Strain*, one of the Rockies' *grand cours* routes, up the Northeast Face of Mount Andromeda.

guidebook, now worn and frayed, told one of them. It was *this* history of the Rockies that I first came to know and love.

As a means of social and cultural production, a climbing guidebook provides an excellent example of how climbing discourses are communicated: they have their own particular logic, their own way of organizing landscape and our sense of it.[7] One merely

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mountaineering history into common usage. See Walt Unsworth, *Everest: A Mountaineering History* (1981; Seattle: The Mountaineers, 2000), 99-100.

[7] The idea that individual perceptions operate beyond the private subjectivity of individuals is not new. Literary scholars have shown, for example, that the style at work within modern mountaineering

has to flip through its pages to see how various discourses commemorate and naturalize the exploration, naming, quantification, and the textual and pictorial representation of the environment.[8] Don't get me wrong. I continue to find a certain beauty in the terse aesthetic of bold red lines weaving their way up the black-and-white images of mountains—the brief, understated entries below saying things like "a sustained outing" or "a radical climb put up in impeccable style." The mechanisms for cultural production, like the means of socialization itself, ensure that social norms and conventions are commonly learned and adhered to by everyone. Most climbers have a pretty good sense of what constitutes "impeccable style." However, these mechanisms can also serve, sometimes surreptitiously, to legitimate the inequities inherent in social life: to reproduce the privileges of the dominant groups.

By examining the various transformations that mountaineering has undergone during its first seventy-five years in the Canadian Rockies, it is possible to demonstrate, in both a theoretical and empirical manner, its mechanisms of production and reproduction. Among the historical phenomena that have influenced the evolution of sporting practices and tradition, industrialization and urbanization are so often presented as the only determining factors. Approaches of this type, common among popular historians, often depict the history of sporting activities, in the terms of sociologist Richard Gruneau, as "a series of rational or functionally necessary adaptations to change, or as the consolidation of consensus rooted in the changing 'normative structure' of

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narratives is far from an insular, self-contained aesthetic. See Reuben Ellis, *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of Neoimperialism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 41; Stephen Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest: Postcolonialism in the Culture of Ascent," *Canadian Literature* 158 (1998): 19; Peter Brooks, *Reading for Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Vintage-Random House, 1985), 39.

society, or even as the fully determined 'product' of the relentless forces of rationalization."[9] Consequently, the influence of the changes in the balance of power between different social agents and groups has been largely ignored, if not entirely absent. However, these power relations and the social struggles they have created within sporting practices, as in all areas of social life, have instead occupied a central role in the meaning, organization, and practices of sports.[10] These important sites of socialization and symbolism have, as sport historian Bruce Kidd has shown, "become terrains of endless intervention, negotiation, and contestation, as individuals and groups seek to influence and control the values and practices that sports privilege and the rewards and status they confer."[11] Bringing mountaineering into these discussions is the chief task I pursue in this body of work.

This study is guided by three main objectives: to identify the historical determinants that have produced and reproduced sporting practice and tradition; to outline and contextualize the larger discursive objectives pursued by various social agents and groups; and, lastly, to describe the articulation of various sporting ethics, form, and style that have, at different times, defined the sport. This threefold purpose is accomplished through an analysis of the major contending interests in mountaineering during the years between 1886 and 1961, based largely in the writings of climbers. Until

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[8] P.A. Nettlefold and E. Stratford, "The Production of Climbing Landscapes-as-Texts," *Australian Geographical Studies* 37, 2 (July 1999): 136-37.

[9] Richard S. Gruneau, "Modernization or Hegemony: Two Views on Sport and Social Development," *Not Just a Game: Essays in Sport Sociology*, ed. Jean Harvey and Hart Cantelon (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 20.

[10] Pierre Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class," *Social Science Information* 17 (1978): 826; Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the 'Popular,'" *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1981), 227-40; Gruneau, "Modernization or Hegemony," 20; Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 3-11.

very recently, despite the mountaineering's hefty moniker as "the most literary of all sports," there have been surprisingly few book-length descriptions of climbing in Rockies.[12] In fact, as Bruce Fairley, editor of *The Canadian Mountaineering Anthology* (1994), has pointed out, "probably 95 percent of Canadian mountain writing is contained in articles of less than five thousand words, which appear in newsletters, magazines and journals."[13] The one source of overwhelming importance in recording the history of mountaineering in the Rockies is the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*), published annually with few exceptions since 1907 by the national mountaineering club, The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC). Had it not been for the ACC's dedicated publication, much of Canada's mountain exploration and climbing history would have gone unwritten and unpublished.

The neatness of the seventy-five years considered in this study is not a mere concoction of my penchant for order. On November 7, 1885, a white-bearded Donald Smith pounded home the last iron spike to complete the nation-wide Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), grandly opening the west and its mountains to what the CPR's general manager, William Cornelius Van Horne, referred to as "the class that travels."[14] In June, 1886, when the first transcontinental passenger train chugged its way up the grade of the Rockies' eastern front, the stage was set, technologically at least, for a new age of Victorian tourism. The first mountaineers to visit Canada—mostly British and American

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[11] Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 7.

[12] Bruce Barcott, "Cliffhangers: The Fatal Descent of the Mountain-Climbing Memoir." *Harper's* (Aug. 1996): 65.

[13] Bruce Fairley, ed., *The Canadian Mountaineering Anthology: Stories from 100 years at the edge* (Vancouver: Lone Pine, 1994), 6-7.

[14] As Lynda Jessup recently pointed out, the company's London agent, Alexander Begg, referred to them more precisely perhaps as "the better class of people such as tourists and others of that character."

men of affluence and leisure—could hardly believe their good fortune: more peaks awaited first ascents than lay in the whole of the European Alps. Seventy-five years later, climbers of a very different generation experienced another renaissance that, again, posited the range as utterly unclimbed, this time the result of a radical shift in sporting philosophy and practice from that which was first established in the Rockies. By 1961, many of the component parts of mountaineering that climbers now recognize as "modern"—the acceptance of increased risk, the use of fixed protection, the codification of technical difficulties and the maintenance of a record of such, and so forth—had emerged in its literature, arguably making the sport of modern mountaineering a postwar phenomenon in Canada. The year 1961, then, is not a purely arbitrary date with which to end this study.

Although the story I tell is roughly chronological, it breaks into two major parts: the first three chapters cover the years between 1886 and 1925, a period typically commemorated by popular historians as the sport's "golden age."[15] It was an exciting period, undoubtedly, in which surveyors, clergymen, and amateur sportsmen and women, along with their requisite guides, first scrambled over the peaks, passes, and glaciers of the Rockies, delineating the topography that lay more than a day's travel from the railway line, and charting what became Banff and Jasper national parks. The formation of the ACC in 1906 helped to focus the efforts of these individuals, who eagerly recorded their tales of pioneering adventure in the prestigious *CAJ*, the sport's characteristic literary

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Lynda Jessup, "The Group of Seven and the Tourist Landscape in Western Canada, or The More Things Change…," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37, 1 (2002): 170.

[15] Chic Scott, *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2000), 38; Chris Jones, *Climbing in North America* (1976; Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1997), 43; Andy Selters, *Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering* (Golden, CO: The American Alpine Club, 2004), 32.

product. Bursting from its pages was a charmingly youthful confidence, such that nothing seemed impossible, even the ascents of the highest unclimbed peaks in the Rockies and beyond. "In time we ought to become a nation of mountaineers," decreed the club's co-founder, Winnipeg's Elizabeth Parker, "loving our mountains with a patriot's passion."[16] It was a nice dream, to be sure.

But the reification of the ephemeral age of the tweed-clad mountain climber begs deeper consideration. We should remember, for example, that what was romanticized as "uninhabited wilderness," particularly in the instance of the Rocky Mountain national parks, was predicated on both the physical and symbolic erasure of an Aboriginal presence; that there is an enormous arrogance, both class and imperial/colonial, in claiming a *first* ascent.[17] Even the "golden" designation itself, far from benign, contains overtones of exclusion that were put in play by the golden-agers themselves, implying that the following generations had somehow degraded the sport from its original "purity."[18] We learn nothing about the underlying hegemony exerted by the ACC, and little about the challenges to its self-styled authority.[19] My intentions, here, are not cynical ones. As a climber myself, I have no reason to discredit the achievements of the men and women who headed up the trail. But the writings of early mountaineers, during this celebrated era and afterwards, must be placed in their wider social and historical context, particularly if we wish to understand the larger ideological debates in which the production and reproduction of mountaineering practices were intricately woven. "The freedom of the hills," mused literary scholar Reuben Ellis, "always has a context."[20]

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[16] Elizabeth Parker, "The Alpine Club of Canada," *CAJ* 1, 1 (1907): 7.

[17] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995), 72-81; I.S. MacLaren forwards Cronon's theoretical thrust in a survey of the meanings that Canadians accord the idea of wilderness, generally, and the idea of wilderness in the context of national parks, specifically Jasper National Park. I.S. MacLaren, "Cultured Wilderness in Jasper National Park," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, 3 (1999): 7-9, 20-1; for a recent discussion on Aboriginal removal in Banff National Park, see Theodore (Ted) Binnema and Melanie Niemi, "'Let the Line Be Drawn Now': Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada," *Environmental History* 11 (2006): 724-50.

[18] Peter Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition and the (Re) Invention of Mountaineering," *Method and Methodology in Sport and Cultural History*, ed. K.B. Wamsley (Dubuque: Brown & Benchmark Publishers, 1995), 237-38.

[19] David Robbins provides an excellent discussion of hegemony and Victorian mountaineering culture within the Alpine Club (England). See David Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class: The Victorian Mountaineers," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 4 (1987): 579-601.

As an overview to this period, chapter one examines the particular meaning and form of mountaineering that the dominant climbing establishments asserted during two of the sport's designated "golden eras," which occurred in the European Alps (1854-1865) and, later, in the Canadian Rockies (1886-1925).[21] By contextualizing and contrasting the representations of various paradigmatic ascents, chapter one suggests that the institutions governing early mountain sport in Canada exerted immense power and authority through the selection and annual publication of mountaineering accounts in the *CAJ*; thereby, particular skills, practices, and values were singled out for praise and legitimation. Analysis of these accounts permits consideration of the unique institutionalized structure of the sport, a structure that developed from a consensus of Victorian sport ethics, form, and style.

However, even through the highly-coded pages of *CAJ*, we might still recognize that mountaineering during the early twentieth century was no less a subject for debate, an endeavor in which meaning, motivation, and end were often contested and in need of definition. Chapter two examines what is perhaps the most enduring enigma in Canadian mountaineering history: the ~~first~~ *disputed* ascent of the highest peak in the Rockies, Mount Robson, in 1909. Regardless whether the claim was borne out in fact, the ascent broke from all dominant conventions asserted by the newly-formed ACC. Consequently, they quietly held their hand just long enough to secure the first ascent for themselves in 1913. Much seemed at stake. In its representations, the struggle for Mt. Robson symbolized the taming of the imagined frontier: a trophy for expansionist progress and a reassertion of Anglo-Protestant manhood. Within a British-imperial discourse and under the banner of "respectable" sport, Canadian nationalists "stormed the heights," so to speak, thereby forcefully asserting their presence in the Canadian ranges.[22] On the so-called "monarch of the Rockies," no one else would do.

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[20] Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 8.

Under the watchful eye of an expanded Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie, mountaineering not only served as a social technology to create a "respectable" social order, but also forged deeper allegiances to nation and Empire.[23] Chapter three examines the "conquest" for the highest peak in Canada, Mount Logan, undertaken by the ACC during the early-to-mid 1920s "following the example of The Alpine Club (England) in its endeavour to climb the highest mountain in the world," Mount Everest.[24] As a background to this celebrated ascent, it first describes how, beginning in the 1890s, mountains and

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[21] An excellent discussion of the invention of Victorian mountaining is offered in Peter H. Hansen, "Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 34, 3 (1995): 300-24.

[22] George Kinney, "Mount Robson," *CAJ* 2, 1 (1909): 4. In early twentieth-century Canada, "respectable" sports, noted sport historian Colin Howell, were more likely to involve "men rather than women; the English rather than the French, whites rather than Blacks and Native people, Protestants rather than Catholics, and middle rather than working-class athletes." Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 28.

[23] See Peter H. Hansen, "Vertical Boundaries, National Identities: British Mountaineering on the Frontiers of Europe and the Empire, 1868-1914," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, 1 (1996): 48-71; Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest": 15-35; Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 17-51.

mountaineering became increasingly associated with motivations of geographic exploration, thus fashioning for itself a degree of collective and imperial symbolism. Second, chapter three shows how the first ascent of Mt. Logan, in its various representations, served to heighten the awareness of national identities, particularly during the interwar period, when international sporting achievements bolstered the growing nationalist movement. While the analysis demonstrates the positioning of mountaineering as both an extension of imperial conquest and an assertion of Canadian nationhood, it simultaneously places on view the shifting balance of Canada's interwar external relations away from Britain and towards an emerging neo-imperialist America.

The examination of "Canada's Everest" concludes the first major section of this study.[25] Without question, if printed words were any indication, the endeavour marked a paradigmatic moment of achievement for the ACC. But given the geographic scope of the study, the chapter's inclusion may seem slightly incongruous: Mt. Logan stands in the Saint Elias Mountains of the Yukon Territory, and not in the main ranges of the Rockies. However, the club's idea to attempt the northern peak occurred in direct response to an increasingly heightened sense of urgency among mountaineers in the Rockies.[26] The period of easy scrambles to impressive summits had all but ended in the immediate years following the First World War. Of the few prominent peaks that remained unclimbed, most presented technical difficulties that conventional methods could not surpass in either imagination or reality. Affluent climbers, thus, gravitated to

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[24] Arthur O. Wheeler, A Few More Words of Appreciation," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 9.

[25] WMCR, M200 AC 0 61, Lambart to Eve, 21 Jan. 1924.

[26] W.W. Foster, "The Story of the Expedition," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 47; A.H. MacCarthy, "Preliminary Explorations," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 27.

other areas in the world, where their particular skills could still gain them impressive-sounding "conquests." In the Rockies, their golden age had sputtered to an end.

The second half of this study moves the discussion forward, beyond the early period of mountaineering, to the "decades of discord" that followed its inevitable crisis.[27] Popular historians of the sport have often discarded the period as one of "stagnation," when Canada was "left behind in a time warp" and climbing became "moribund for decades."[28] Of course, the economic gloom of the 1930s strained amateur leisure trends, just as the following years of wartime constraints further disrupted the lives of Canadians; but mountaineering was not simply dormant during this period. Quite the contrary: the growth of interest in skiing and its extension to the Rockies led to the ascents of mountain peaks on skis during the long winter months, a season usually two-to-three times the length of the average summer season. In fact, during the deepest years of the Great Depression, ski mountaineering noticeably emerged as a distinct sporting form in the pages of the *CAJ*, which, for the first time, suddenly asserted that "mountaineers may… be divided into three classes, those who climb only in the summer, those who prefer the winter, which affords the additional thrill of ski-ing on the downhill portions, and those who like both."[29] By the mid-to-late thirties, ski mountaineering became fully enshrined in the dominant mountaineering culture, just as first "winter ascents" and traverses had become part of its lexicon. Moribund indeed!

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[27] The phrase "decades of discord" is John Herd Thompson's. John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).

[28] Jones, *Climbs in North America*, 90; Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 107; Selters, *Ways to the Stars*, 80.

[29] Capt. A.H. d'Egville, "Ski-Mountaineering," *CAJ* 20 (1932): 96.

But a closer examination of the early elaboration of mountain skiing might assuage claims of historiographic neglect. In fact, the introduction of skiing to the Rockies was much slower than what we might come to expect given the sport's sudden literary presence within the *CAJ* of the early 1930s. Chapter four focuses on how early skiing was constrained and, later, carefully generated by the ACC. It suggests that the *CAJ* played a strategic role in reinventing skiing within the wider discourses of Victorian mountaineering, which subsequently confirmed and legitimated Anglo-Canadian hegemony. The fact that mountain skiing was so unworthy of comment only until it was so thoroughly cast within the recognizable principles and practices of *their* sport illustrates how the club struggled with the weight of its own tradition during the interwar period. To be sure, backcountry skiing reinvigorated the ACC and offered a wider range of recreational pursuits to club members in the 1930s and thereafter, but, as this chapter argues, its adoption by mountaineers should not really be seen as innovative in the wider sense of mountaineering as sport. It was an obvious extension of an older form of mountaineering as exploration, awkwardly modified by a frustrated generation of mountaineers who, by their own standards, had little left to do in the range.

Chapter five shifts the emphasis forward to the years following the Second World War to focus on the increased challenges to the hegemony held by the ACC over both the definition and representation of mountaineering, as disparate groups and younger generations contentiously initiated an emergent era of technical rock climbing.[30] Relying on the writings of the period's most contentious climber, Austrian-emigrant Hans Gmoser, it highlights a fundamental and discursive shift in the way mountaineering accomplishment was both recorded and valued, which ultimately subverted the ACC's power to represent, signify, and claim semiotic reign over the range. With the decline of mountaineering's principal signification of exploratory mountaineering—centred on a discourse of rewards for moral and physical fitness, manliness, patriotism, and mastery over nature—an alternative set of meanings emerged that, by the early 1960s, rose to dominance and brought climbing mountains into its modern period. Subsequently, mountaineering as exploration has been contained within the institutional and cultural traditions of the sport and remains a distinctive but subordinate discourse within climbing culture today.

The thrust of this study lies in the analysis of two fundamental questions that, according to historian Colin D. Howell, all historians of all sports activities must always address: What is sport? And what is it for? The answers to these questions, Howell argues, are not often simple.[31] In the pages that follow, I attempt to answer these questions in the specific context of various cultural struggles over the form and meaning of mountaineering, an attempt that inevitably leads to discussions of *power* or "the capacity of a person or group of persons to employ resources of different types in order to secure outcomes."[32] As the primary gatekeeper of early mountaineering achievement, the ACC and its journal offer an obvious starting point. What was worthy of recognition in the pages of the *CAJ*? What was not? The emergence of cultural forms and/or practices counter to the dominant institutionalized interests of the ACC—the "unmanly" ascent of Mt. Robson in 1909, for example, or the "unrespectable" commodification of skiing

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[30] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 123.

[31] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 8.

[32] Gruneau, "Modernization or Hegemony," 22; Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 347.

during the 1910s and 1920s, certainly the "fanatical" rock-climbing practices of the 1950s—forced the amateur proselytizers of mountaineering into a dynamic state of readjustment, one of "appropriation and *ex*-propriation," particularly when such pressures call into question "the balance of social order and threaten its legitimacy."[33] Contemplating these historical transformations brings to view an essential reality of dominant cultural forms and practices: that they were never absolute in their domination, nor could they remain static, for better or for worse.

Remember what I said in the introductory paragraphs—that climbing mountains has many histories? Like that which is presented in Dougherty's guidebook, what I present here is very much a selected history. My own selections have been made in the belief that too much emphasis on the constructing power of the sport's dominant representations creates a picture in which those expressions have the capacity to shape the world entirely in their image. Conversely, too much insistence on the power of those who stand apart from dominant discourses produces a similarly unreal impression. Instead, I have chosen to walk the tightrope between these two perspectives. Leaning too far one way or the other, in this instance, gives up the game.

Undoubtedly, those most familiar with the popular story of mountaineering in the Rockies will raise objections to whom and what I have included. Where is J. J. McArthur, for example, or Morrison Bridgland? Why is Ostheimer excluded? How about Mary Jobe and the story of Mount Alexander or Conrad Kain's famous first ascent of Mount Louis? To these questions, I can only answer that this project does not seek to be wholly representative in breadth. Nor does it canvas all regions of the Rockies equally. Rather, it is concerned with a small selection of ascents commonly recognized by climbers and armchair enthusiasts as significant to the sport: “classics” in the sense that they made history and continue to be climbs of enduring worth. My intention, however, is not merely to retell a few good tales. Several of the defining moments examined in this study are already well known in the public register: the controversy surrounding the first ascent of Mt. Robson, for example, or the epic first ascent of Mt. Logan. Others have attracted less attention. Seldom, though, has this history been examined in its wider historical and cultural context. What social complexities do these cherished stories reveal? What cultural work do they perform? By critically reading about mountaineering within the context of history, we might better appreciate that the writings of mountain climbers, often relegated to little-known newsletters, journals, and magazines, have a justifiable place within broader discussions of the ideas and trends that shaped twentieth-century Canada.

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[33] Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing," 227; Harvey and Cantelon, *Not Just a Game*, 6.

CHAPTER ONE

The Golden Years of Mountaineering in Canada:

Ethics, Form, and Style, 1886-1925

The era of first great ascents in the Canadian mountain ranges ended in 1925, arguably, with the successful ascents of Mt. Logan and Mt. Alberta. Located deep in the Yukon Territory's Saint Elias Range, Mt. Logan is the highest mountain in Canada. Lying near the southern limits of Jasper National Park, between the streams that form the headwaters of the Athabasca River, Mt. Alberta was the last mountain of its stature left unclimbed in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Their first ascents together illustrated the predicament of mountaineering in Canada in the last years of what is regarded as its "golden age." According to climbing historian Chris Jones, "Mount Logan summarized the achievements of the past: stoic heroism in the face of brute nature. Mount Alberta looked to the future: new skills learned in Europe were applied to a technically demanding route."[1] Despite the innovation of the remarkable ascent of Mt. Alberta, the expedition was largely overshadowed by the ascent in the same year of Mt. Logan. If the number of published words is any indication, Mt. Alberta was insignificant compared to Logan. Organized under the auspices of The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), the expedition up Logan received exhaustive coverage and celebration in the 1925 volume of the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*).[2] In that same volume, only a cursory five-line statement noted the successful ascent of Mt. Alberta. It appeared in the final pages, beneath the unremarkable heading, "Various First Ascents." Jasper ski guide Richard Langlais argued that the notice "was remarkably terse considering the impact [that the ascent's] success had on individuals and the space given to much more mundane events."[3] But the innovation had not aligned with the ethics of mountaineering established in Europe's golden era and then imported and adopted in North America. A generation would pass before the vanguard in Canada acknowledged the ascent's significance.

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[1] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 91.

By examining the ethics, form, and style asserted in early mountaineering during two of the sport's designated "golden eras," which occurred in the European Alps and, later, in the Canadian ranges, this chapter analyses the shift that occurred when subsequent generations attempted to re-imagine and re-write the sporting-alpine landscape sketched by their forebears. Old-school golden-agers had found the least difficult way up and down Mt. Logan; innovators had found their way up and down Mt. Alberta, which offers no route that older methods had been able to exploit. Analysing that shift depends for its theoretical orientation on Peter Donnelly's essay, "The Invention of Tradition and the (Re) Invention of Mountaineering" (1995). "Where ethics and moral suasion govern the sport," Donnelly argued, "change becomes a constant as each new generation seeks new challenges and forms of expression in sport."[4] Throughout the history of mountaineering, changes in the ethics, form, and style of the sport have commonly translated into progressively harder ascents. Contested in face-to-face

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[2] "The Mount Logan Expedition," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 1-126.

[3] Richard Langlais, "Alpinism or Nationalism: The Japanese Climb of Mt. Alberta," *CAJ* 72 (1989): 54.

[4] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 242.

exchanges and in alpine journals, departures from the older, accepted, and unarticulated-yet-understood doctrine have been negotiated through cultural struggle, exhibiting inherent inter-generational discrepancies and, by the 1920s, inter-class and inter-racial features. Contrasting the early paradigmatic moments in mountaineering history with the socially sanctioned climbing ethics of the era helps place on view the different regard in which the ascents of mounts Logan and Alberta in 1925 were held.

As for its content, this chapter is largely informed by mountaineering accounts written in the *CAJ* and the *American Alpine Journal* (*AAJ*) between 1886 and 1925, a period now popularized as "the glory days of Canadian mountaineering."[5] Narratives written in this era are usually very formal and controlled: mountaineers appear as splendid fellows incapable of error or malice. Harsh words are never spoken, and the climbs generally progress in orderly fashion from base to summit. The institutions governing early mountain sport exerted immense influence and authority over the publication of such accounts; thereby, conformity to accepted practice—a codified sets of rules—was sanctioned. Analysis of these accounts, written throughout the early period of mountaineering in Canadian, permits consideration of the institutionalized structure of the sport, a structure that developed from a consensus of Victorian sport ethics, form, and style.

The Golden Age of Mountaineering

Early mountaineering in Canada developed from origins of the sport in the European Alps during the mid-nineteenth century. It is widely accepted in popular history that the golden age of mountaineering occurred in the Alps between the years 1854 and 1865, a period during which most of the first ascents of the major alpine summits were recorded, neatly framed by the first British ascents of the Wetterhorn and Matterhorn.[6] Now, the "golden" designation, initially assigned to this period by C. D. Cunningham in 1887, implied that the sport had degenerated from its original purity and entered a somewhat less significant "silver age" in the years that followed Edward Whymper's famous 1865 ascent of the Matterhorn.[7] Drawing on British historian and author Eric Hobsbawm, Donnelly asserted that, "by 1887, Britain saw itself very clearly as a sporting nation, mountaineering was then identifiably a sport and Cunningham was engaging in the most popular activity of the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the invention of tradition."[8] Although underscored with sharp criticism towards younger generations of climbers, Cunningham's 1887 characterization clearly glorified the first generation of British climbers, and not only asserted a British historical presence in Europe but also, according to Donnelly, "attempted to ensure that their form / style of mountaineering became *the* form / style of the sport for the future."[9]

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[5] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 38.

Early alpine journals and guidebooks played a crucial role in the institutionalization of mountaineering by promoting the accepted practices that were generally characterized by a series of complex, tacit rules and were forged by an invented tradition. Recognition was awarded to those activities that most closely conformed to the accepted norm and withheld from those that did not.[10] Under the institutional aegis of The Alpine Club (England), newly formed in 1857, the 1859 publication of *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers* first circulated and popularized climbing accounts of British mountaineers and their guides.[11] Two subsequent volumes were published in 1862, and were followed, in 1863 and thereafter, by the quarterly publication of *The Alpine Journal*.[12] Once established, the British journal displayed and maintained mountaineering as *Britain's* sport with a recognizable form and style that was later emulated by the North American climbing organizations, namely The American Alpine Club (AAC) and the ACC. The ensuing paragraphs attempt to clarify some of the (often unspoken) rules that governed the first generations of British climbers—the self-designated golden-agers—to illustrate how trends were later diffused through the international climbing fraternity and continued to be honoured in North America during the early twentieth century.

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[6] Fergus Fleming, *Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 291; Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 237.

[7] Cunningham cast the history of mid-Victorian mountaineering as "'the great age of conquest' in the Alps, and it may also be well termed the 'golden age' in the history of mountaineering." C.D. Cunningham and W. de W. Abney, *The Pioneers of the Alps* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1887), 14; Edward Whymper, *Scrambles amongst the Alps*, ed. H.E.G. Tyndale (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1986).

[8] Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass producing traditions: Europe, 1970-1914," *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263-307; Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 237.

[9] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 238.

Primarily, climbers were to be accompanied by guides: local Alpine villagers who led the middle-class, "gentlemanly" ranks to the summits of mountains, and, in addition, assumed the bulk of the physical burdens. They carried loads, cut steps, set up camp, and prepared meals. In fact, during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, guided mountaineering became so popular that it was commonplace for one in ten of the healthy boys who lived in alpine villages to become guides, although it was considerably easier for sons of existing guides to pursue family tradition. Alpine Club members, known as *Englanders*, were often considered the best clients as they were generally regarded (not altogether accurately) as the wealthiest and finest climbers in Europe—a generalized cachet associated with, and no doubt promoted by, the pretentious ranks of The Alpine Club.[13] Similarly, "the Victorians built up their guides into a race of supermen," wrote mountaineering historian Walt Unsworth, "and for many years it was confidently asserted that no amateur could ever expect to be as good as a good guide."[14] Although some of the period's leading mountaineers practised guideless climbing, such ascents were generally frowned upon and did not become standard practice in Europe until the First World War.

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[10] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class: the Victorian Mountaineers": 579-601.

[11] Although The Alpine Club was the first of its kind in 1857, the organization never became a *national* club like its European counterparts which followed suit over the next two decades, namely the French, Italian, Swiss, and Austrian Alpine Clubs. In this way, Unsworth noted, *The* Alpine Club became the self-styled authority "of all that was good and pure in the mountain matters." See Walt Unsworth, *Hold the Heights: The Foundations of Mountaineering* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), 69.

[12] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class": 584.

Mountaineers commonly climbed in groups of three or more; a party of two was ill advised, whereas to climb alone (solo) was simply unthinkable. Such ethics were deeply rooted in the perceived notions of risk that were prevalent during the mid-Victorian era. According to Donnelly, "the taking of risks was never acceptable, and these early climbers had a very clear sense of what was inappropriate or unacceptable in terms of choice of route, weather, etc."[15] For example, while early climbers eagerly scaled mountains in order to secure first ascents, they did so by the easiest, most amenable route—what climbers today might call a "walk up." To attempt more technically challenging routes was not sensible according to the mid-Victorian climbing ethos. Once a mountain had borne a first-ascent party, a long period usually passed before a second attempt was made. The risk was no longer justifiable because a second ascent did not yet possess the valued social currency of the first, even if by a new, or harder route.

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[13] Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 72-4.

[14] Ibid., 74.

By 1865, the contest for first ascents had spread throughout Europe; and, in the minds of climbers, the Alps were soon exhausted. With very few major unclimbed summits remaining in the European ranges, climbers began to seek first ascents beyond the confines of Europe, carrying with them British prejudices and standards into the mountain ranges of New Zealand, Africa, Asia, and the Americas.[16] They also brought with them their European guides. Thus, by the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the sport, in the European ranges at least, was forced to change as a direct result of its own impetus. If the form and style of early mountaineering as established during the sport's golden age had not changed, then surely, as Donnelly asserted, "there would be no sport."[17] Consider the following reasons: first, it [illegible] only a matter of time, under the original rules, before first ascents in other ranges were exhausted, a fate similar to that of the European Alps during the dying days of the golden age. Secondly, there was no sporting virtue invested in second ascents, particularly those that simply followed the first-ascent route. The lack of virtue was partly attributed to the ideologies that underscored and fuelled mid-Victorian mountaineering, namely those of British exploration and expansion. These geopolitical projects, wielded in the name of Empire, prompted men to boldly venture "where the map was still blank."[18] Therefore, younger generations of

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[15] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 238-39.

[16] Ronald W. Clark, *Men, Myths and Mountains* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), 48.

[17] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 239.

[18] See Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 17-51.

climbers were forced to travel farther and farther afield in order to prove their worth to the burgeoning international climbing fraternity, and this, consequently, limited participation to those members of the middle and upper classes who possessed the time and wealth necessary for extended campaigns to foreign ranges.[19] Illustrative of these inherent quandaries, a frustrated Clinton Dent wrote as follows in 1876:

> The older members of the Club have left us, the youthful aspirants, but little to do in the Alps. We follow them meekly, either by walking up their mountains by new routes, or by climbing some despised outstanding spur of the peaks they first trod under foot. They have left us but these rock aiguilles. They have picked out the plums and left us the stones.[20]

If first ascents were all that constituted mountaineering as a sport, it simply could not have endured.

In the wake of the 1865 Matterhorn disaster, recounted in Whymper's now-canonized *Scrambles amongst the Alps*, the so-called "silver age" of mountaineering began in the European Alps. On the descent, the rope that bound the team together broke, and four climbers plunged to their deaths 1, 220 metres below. It was certainly not the worst mountaineering accident in the history of the Alps, but it was the first to garner substantial public notice. Although the immediate effect of the incident was to "cast a cloud over mountaineers and mountaineering," it also inspired fierce debates concerning the ethics of climbing and the disturbing prospects of the apparent lack of new challenges in the Alps.[21] During this second phase, mountaineering was consequently re-imagined. Because significance and recognition began to be awarded to not just summit achievement but also the route selected, innovative mountaineers began to attempt previously "bagged" peaks by un-established lines that were almost always more challenging and dangerous than the original route.

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[19] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 239.

[20] C.T. Dent, "Two attempts on the Aiguille du Dru," *Alpine Journal* 7 (1876): 65.

According to Walt Unsworth, "the idea that the route was as important as the summit meant that lesser peaks, unknown ridges and quite small rock faces could all be turned to advantage."[22] As new routes began to gain significance and prestige within the sport, so, too, did new variations of older, established routes, such as first winter ascents or first women's ascents. The fact that such variations had become significant enough to record in *The Alpine Journal* suggested a growing acknowledgment that risk was sometimes necessary to the successful completion of a coveted new line. "These changes made the first generation apoplectic but," Donnelly noted, "because of the particular structural form of the sport that they had created, they were unable to prevent the changes."[23] Instead, they designated the second-rate era silver and witnessed the birth of modern rock climbing and other new forms of mountaineering in a brilliant reinvention of tradition. Decades passed before such trends spread beyond their Alpine birthplace to the ranges of North America.

The Golden Age in the Canadian Alps

The completion of the Canadian transcontinental railway in November 1885 coincided neatly with the growing predicament among mountaineers in the European Alps. Affluent British climbers, heavily influenced by the virtues of earlier generations, turned to the North American ranges in search of unclimbed peaks just as the railway

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[21] Clark, *Men, Myths and Mountains*, 69-70.

[22] Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 117.

opened the mountains of Alberta and British Columbia. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) encouraged the sport by actively promoting its route through the Rocky and Columbia Mountains with advertisements that boasted that

> the climbers find in the Canadian Rockies the supreme difficulties and delights that tempt men to the mastery of mountains. Snow-capped peaks, moraines, glaciers; all the charm and hazard of the Swiss mountains are here, but multiplied. The Canadian Rockies have been well termed *Fifty Switzerlands in One*. This famous alpine region is reached only by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Swiss guides are to be found at all mountain hotels.[24]

Ensconced in the Victorian comforts of the newly built CPR hotels, British and American amateur sportsmen, along with the requisite Swiss guides, initiated the period of first great ascents in the Canadian ranges. Of those early British climbers, Sir James Outram and J. Norman Collie best exemplified the sporting traditions of the early Canadian alpine scene.

Credited with numerous first ascents that included mounts Columbia, Forbes, Bryce, and Assiniboine, Outram was one of the most dynamic amateur climbers in Canada during the early part of the twentieth century. Though climbing in the Rockies for only three seasons, in 1900, 1901, and 1902, Outram enjoyed unparalleled success. For instance, he was credited with the first ascents of nine of the highest peaks in the Rockies. He accomplished these ascents in just over a month in 1902.[25] Like most foreign mountaineers visiting the Rockies, Outram travelled in the company of skilled European mountain guides, in particular Christian Kaufmann, along with an entourage of packers, sometimes referred to as horse wranglers.

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[23] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 240.

[24] *CAJ* 3 (1911): unpaginated.

[25] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 60.

When the ACC formed in 1906 under the direction of Dominion Lands Surveyor, Arthur O. Wheeler, Outram was immediately elected as one of the club's earliest honorary members. After his death in 1925, Outram's stature was compared in the *CAJ* to that of Whymper's. This connection was easily made, of course, because of Mt. Assiniboine's title as "the Matterhorn of the Rockies."[26] Whymper's importance to early Canadian mountaineering, however, was demonstrated before Outram's ascent of Mt. Assiniboine in 1901. A CPR publicity campaign staged earlier in that same year brought Whymper to Canada "to give the new alpine playground his societal approval."[27] With Whymper's paternal endorsement, the Canadian Rockies were officially open for business with more peaks available for first ascents than in all of Europe.

Four years before Outram's famous ascent of Mt. Assiniboine, another Englishman met considerable acclaim among the Canadian peaks. J. Norman Collie, famed British chemist and mountaineer, first visited the Canadian Rockies in 1897, when he succeeded in making the first recorded ascent of both mounts Lefroy and Victoria, two of the highest unclimbed peaks in the Lake Louise area. The following year, Collie returned to the Rockies in the company of two "crack Alpine Club men," Hugh Stutfield and Herman Woolley, who together became the (recorded) first to explore and map the Freshfield, Wapta, and Columbia icefields. Standing atop the previously unclimbed Mount Athabasca, Collie and Woolley gazed down upon the Columbia Icefield in the evening light. Collie would later remark that the view "was one that does not fall often to the lot of modern mountaineers. A new world spread at our feet: to the westward stretched a vast icefield probably never before seen by human eye, and surrounded by entirely unknown, unnamed and unclimbed peaks."[28] Of course, Collie and Woolley had no way of knowing whether or not this was indeed the *first* view of the Columbia Icefield, the largest continuous ice sheet in the Canadian Rockies. It is highly probable that First Nations peoples would have, at the very least, sighted the 300-square-kilometer icefield while traveling through the range.

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[26] "In Memoriam: Sir James Outram," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 127-8.

During six exploratory expeditions to the Canadian Rockies spanning fourteen years, Collie made twenty-one first ascents and named at least thirty mountains. Publicity from Collie and Stutfield's popular book, entitled *Climbs and Explorations in the Canadian Rockies* (1903), and various lectures given in Canada and abroad, as well as numerous exploration accounts that they wrote for mountaineering journals, undeniably contributed to the growing popularity of the Canadian ranges among the international climbing fraternity of the early 1900s.[29]

After his remarkable season in 1902, Outram seldom climbed again. Collie, on the other hand, continued to climb peaks and explore mountain regions until the outbreak of the First World War, at which time he retired to England. Regarding Collie, the eminent British climber Geoffrey Winthrop Young wrote that

> he was all but the last survivor of a group of great mountaineers.... Freshfield, Conway, Slingsby, Bruce, Collie, Mummery, each found his own territory and wrote his own prophetic books of adventure. And of them all, perhaps, Norman Collie was the man of the greatest natural endowment and the man most exclusively devoted to mountains.[30]

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[27] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 43.

[28] H.E.M. Stutfield and J. Norman Collie, *Climbs and Explorations in the Canadian Rockies* (1903; Calgary: Aquila Books, 1998), 107.

[29] William G. Taylor, *The Snows of Yesteryear: J. Norman Collie, Mountaineer* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 2.

[30] G. Winthrop Young, "John Norman Collie," *AJ* 55 (May 1943): 62.

The contributions of Outram, Collie, and their guides and outfits were fundamental in setting the stage for mountaineering in Canada.[31] Despite their obvious skill and tenacity, however, what they accomplished was not innovative, but, rather, revelatory of early Canadian mountaineering as an extension of a much earlier Victorian "sporting" tradition that resembled exploration more than actual sport.[32] As for its ideology, mountaineering continued to be clothed "in the aristocratic mantle of British amateurism."[33] Consider, for example, Collie's anxious words, after he received news, from England, of Whymper's 1901 visit to the Canadian Rockies at the request of the CPR: "Why the devil he won't leave them alone I don't know.... [A]ll I can say is *damn* the man! Why I am so mad about it is that it is not done for sport at all, or because Whymper has any real liking for the hills. From beginning to end it is all *dollars*."[34]

The earliest amateur codes restricted participation on the basis of class, gender, and race, and illustrated, according to sport historian Bruce Kidd, "the upper classes' desire to reproduce the social hierarchies of Victorian England and the British Empire and to maintain the primacy of sports as an expression of manly honour and elegant display."[35] In late nineteenth-century Canada, however, the ideological landscape had significantly shifted, owing, in part, to aggressive industrial and commercial competition.

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[31] Although Collie's and Outram's impressive feats overcame many of the major challenges of the day, Jones noted, "there were others who were hard on their heals." Of those, the Appalachian Mountain Club members formed a decisive force that deserves mention. Although they failed to make many first ascents of the more "significant" mountains, they rarely hired European guides and returned season after season to open mountain regions in the country. See Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 33-50.

[32] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 239.

[33] Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 27.

[34] Qtd. in Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 43. The lively and revealing comment does much to dispel the whole "splendid fellow" image so typical in the formal writings of mountaineers.

[35] Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 27.

The culture of sports as upper-class ostentation was surpassed by a new ethos of "civilized" contest and achievement. "Perhaps most important," Kidd noted,

> a growing segment of the middle-class came to believe sports would help civilize the lower orders. Along with others from the middle and working classes who established voluntary associations to promote public libraries, gardening clubs, and popular science lectures in the interests of purposeful leisure or 'rational recreation,' the middle-class amateurs hoped that sports would encourage good citizenship, social harmony, and nationalism.[36]

Consider the philosophical foundations of the ACC, set out by co-founder Elizabeth Parker in the first volume of the *CAJ*.[37] Both preservationist and nationalistic breadth are emphasized by Parker, who envisioned the club as "a national trust for the defence of our mountain solitudes," and hoped "in time we ought to become a nation of mountaineers, loving our mountains with a patriot's passion."[38] Although the ACC was modeled on its British predecessor, the Alpine Club, its mandate drew heavily from emerging sport ideologies of the period, specifically modified for Canadian conditions.

With the annual publication of the *CAJ*, first printed in 1907, the ACC quickly became the eminent self-styled authority on mountaineering in Canada, particularly of the Rocky Mountain parks. Contrary to British tradition, however, the ACC was enlightened in so far as it permitted women among its membership.[39] In fact, according to historian PearlAnn Reichwein, "one third of ACC memberships in 1907 were held by women; by 1927, women held close to one half."[40] Gina La Force, writing in the 1979 *CAJ*, attributed this diversity to the innovations demanded by Canada's size and sparse population.[41] Nevertheless, there existed a clear distinction between what was considered an appropriate climb for a lady and for a gentleman. Throughout its first decades, the club relegated its women members to the easier routes at its annual summer mountaineering camps, whereas the more prominent men were awarded opportunities to attempt the more difficult peaks for the prestige of the club. Note, for example, Phyllis Munday's surprise even almost two decades into the club's history when Arthur Wheeler, co-founder and director of the ACC, granted her permission to join a club climb of Mount Robson, the highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies, during the 1925 club camp:

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[36] Ibid., 28.

[37] Parker, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 3-8.

[38] Ibid.: 7.

[39] The Alpine Club (England) did not permit women members until 1974. See Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 69.

> The return from a climb is hardly the time one expects a grand surprise. This was my experience on returning from Mt. Mumm, when Wheeler told my husband to be prepared to go to the high camp on Mt. Robson next morning and, in spite of the prevailing impression that no women would be allowed to attempt the "big climb," I found I was able to go.[42]

Nevertheless, as more Canadians began to participate in alpine sports and leisure, both men and women—largely of the urban, middle classes—attended the club's annual camps, and enjoyed the pleasures of Canada's new "national playground."[43]

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[40] PearlAnn Reichwein, "At the Foot of the Mountain: Preliminary Thoughts on the Alpine Club of Canada, 1906-1925," *Changing Parks*, ed. John S. Marsh and Bruce W. Hodgins (Toronto: Natural History Book, 1998), 162.

[41] Gina L. La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada, 1906 to 1929: Modernization, Canadian Nationalism, and Anglo-Saxon Mountaineering," *CAJ* 62 (1979): 40.

[42] Phyllis Munday, "First Ascent of Mt. Robson by Lady Members," *CAJ* 14 (1924): 68.

[43] The National Policy, adopted by the Macdonald government in 1878, promoted the idea that the Canadian West should be exploited for its tourism potential. According to Macdonald, the most important resource the west could offer was the "unsurpassed beauty and grandeur" of its mountains, which, with the proper facilities in place, such as parks, would attract tourism dollars to lessen the debt leftover from the railroad. See Robert Craig Brown, "The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resource and National Park Policy in Canada, 1887-1914," *Canadian Parks in Perspective*, ed. J.G. Nelson (Montreal: Harvest House, 1969), 46-62.

Despite the slight diversions from the earlier climbing ethos enshrined by the Alpine Club (England), mountaineering within the early ACC generally followed the same tacit codes that governed the older, gentlemanly culture. In fact, rather than passively receiving the older traditions, the ACC actively asserted them to uphold their imagined sense of imperial duty, as the nation took "her rightful place near the pinnacle of natural evolution as the lynchpin of Empire."[44] Annually informing members of the year's most significant alpine achievements, the *CAJ* depicted and promoted the accepted ethics, form, and style asserted by the club, thereby rewarding recognition to conventional practice. Convention included climbing with professional guides, choosing amenable routes, and travelling in parties of three or more.[45]

Breach of etiquette was often sanctioned through moral suasion and, according to Peter Donnelly, met with "ridicule and the refusal to record a claimed achievement."[46] The highly controversial first ascent of Mt. Robson is a prime example.[47] Questioning the purported 1909 ascent, made by Rev. George Kinney and Donald "Curly" Phillips, the club's executive withheld recognition for four years, only to later award the achievement to the ACC's guide, Austrian-immigrant Conrad Kain, and club members Albert MacCarthy and William Foster in 1913.

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[44] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 42.

[45] In some rare cases, permission from the club's executive was granted to extremely competent members to attempt a climb alone with a guide. The formidable team of guide Conrad Kain and Albert MacCarthy is one example. See Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 69-87.

[46] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 241-42.

[47] See Zac Robinson, "Storming the Heights: Canadian Frontier Nationalism and the Making of Manhood in the Conquest of Mount Robson, 1906-1913," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, 3 (2005): 415-433.

Of the various speculations concerning the merits of Kinney's claim, it cannot be denied, despite his social standing, that Kinney trespassed on code. Given the haphazard nature of the climb, the lack of sanctioned approval, the absence of a professional guide, and the only witness, Phillips, a young, inexperienced trail hand, endorsement of the unconventional ascent would have been difficult for the ACC.[48] The route Kinney and Phillips ascended, Wheeler later commented in the 1912 *CAJ*, "looked impossible, and certainly one of tremendous peril.... He [Kinney] has been criticized rather severely by *practical mountaineers* [emphasis mine] for taking on so extremely dangerous a climb a companion who had no previous experience."[49] It scarcely needs saying that the Kinney-Phillips climb shook the ACC to its ideological core. Despite establishing what was likely the most challenging technical alpine route in the Canadian Rockies of the time, George Kinney became the most "magnificent failure" in Canadian mountaineering history.[50]

Exhibited in articles published by the *CAJ*, the essential conservatism underlying the activities of the ACC continued into the 1920s. Slight changes, however, are notable in the types of climbing accounts the *CAJ* published, suggesting that standards had slowly shifted to include new variations, in addition to first ascents, as significant achievements. For example, the last article in the "Mountaineering Section" of the 1923 volume, titled "The Second Ascent of Mt. Sir Douglas," reported a second ascent of a route previously climbed.[51] The 1924 volume also evidenced this shift because it featured an account of a new route up a previously climbed peak, "The Second Ascent of Sir Donald by West Face," followed by Phyllis Munday's narrative entitled "First Ascent of Mt. Robson by Lady Members."[52] Precedence, however, was granted to the first ascents of unclimbed peaks, but, like the Alps of the 1860s, unclimbed peaks had gradually grown scarce even in the vast Rocky Mountains of Canada.

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[48] See Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 70-82.

[49] Arthur O. Wheeler, "The Alpine Club of Canada's Expedition to Jasper Park, Yellowhead Pass and Mount Robson Region, 1911," *CAJ* 4 (1912): 54.

[50] John T. Coleman, "Magnificent Failure," *The Province: B.C. Magazine*, Mar. 30, 1957, 3.

By the 1920s, the alpine scene in Europe had drastically changed. British climbers were no longer at the leading edge of the sport in the Alps. Skiing was introduced at Chamonix in 1896 and, according to Walt Unsworth, "before long [it] had ousted mountaineering as the premiere alpine sport with an enormous effect on the region, both visually and economically."[53] Climbers' perceptions had changed, as well. Innovative new techniques and technologies, including pitons and carabiners, were tested as alpinism rapidly evolved. The ACC was not unaware of the new enthusiasm sweeping the European climbing world. "Not only did the ACC subscribe to European journals," noted Gina La Force, "but new technologies were brought to its doorstep when, in 1925, a Japanese party equipped with new mechanical aids scaled Mount Alberta."[54] Just north of the Columbia Icefield, Mount Alberta is located in the Winston Churchill Range, a group of mountains forming a wedge between the Athabasca and Sunwapta rivers, where it stands virtually alone, rearing 2, 200 metres above the Athabasca River Valley between Habel and Lynx creeks (see Fig. 2). The mountain posed new technical challenges to the North American "peak-bagging" fraternity because it offered no possibility of

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[51] T.O.A. West, "The Second Ascent of Mt. Sir Douglas," *CAJ* 13 (1923): 124-29.

[52] Val A. Flynn, "The Second Ascent of Sir Donald by West Face," *CAJ* 14 (1924): 66-67; Phyllis Munday, "First Ascent of Mt. Robson by Lady Members," *CAJ* 14 (1924): 68-74.

[53] Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 140.

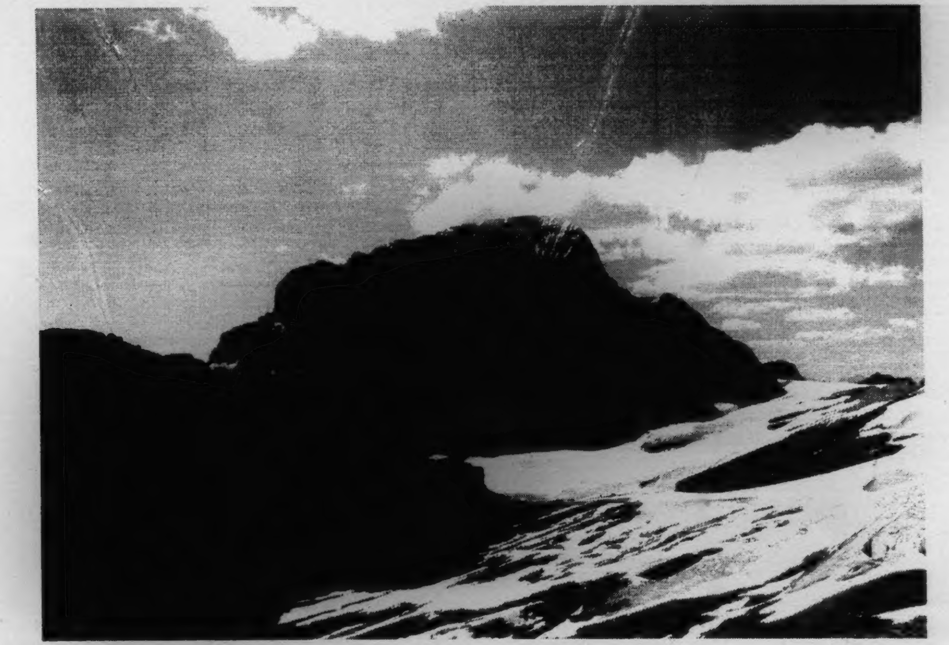

Fig. 2 Author. The east face of Mount Alberta from Woolley Shoulder. Photograph, August 2003

conventional routes. With all of the major mountains of the Canadian Rockies climbed by 1925, Mt. Alberta had become "a daunting, almost insolent, challenge."[55]

On completing an ascent of Diadem Peak in 1898, Collie, Stutfield, and Woolley were afforded the first recorded sighting of Mt. Alberta from the east. Convinced they had discovered Mount Brown, one of the famed mythic giants of the Canadian Rockies, Collie wrote as follows:

> Quite close, as it seemed, the overpowering mass of the supposed Mount Brown (Alberta), towered frowning many hundreds of feet above us. It is a superb peak, like a gigantic castle in shape, with terrific black cliffs falling on the sides. A great wall of dark thunder-cloud loomed up over its summit; and there was a sublime aloofness, an air of grim inaccessibility.[56]

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[54] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 43.

[55] Langlais, "Alpinism or Nationalism": 54.

Twenty-three years later, alpine historians and climbers J. Monroe Thorington and Howard Palmer published a guidebook titled *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (1921), which featured an alluring photograph of Mt. Alberta as the frontispiece (see Fig. 3). The significance of the mountain was single-handedly underscored by the taunting caption beneath the image, which read, "A Formidable Unclimbed Peak of the Range."[57] According to Chris Jones, "there were no climbers then active in Canada who were not aware of its significance."[58] Unbeknownst to North American mountaineers, however, designs for the notorious peak were being formed overseas—and not across the Atlantic this time.

The Japanese began to visit the European Alps in 1905, soon after the formation of the Japanese Alpine Club. Although little known in North American climbing circles at the time, the Japanese had developed a substantial mountaineering culture of their own, also modeled on the Alpine Club (England). The influence of the British was chiefly attributed to the English missionary Walter Weston, who published *Mountaineering and Exploration in the Japanese Alps* in 1896, and thereby became known as the founder of Japanese mountaineering.[59] Two decades later, in 1921, mountaineering in Japan was given another major boost when Yuko Maki and three Swiss guides made the daring first

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[56] Stutfield and Collie, *Climbs and Explorations*, 129. Collie originally believed the mountain was either Mount Brown or Mount Hooker, the two mythic giants of exaggerated proportions originally recounted by botanist David Douglas after his exploration of the Rocky Mountains in 1827.

[57] Howard Palmer and J. Monroe Thorington, *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (New York: The American Alpine Club, 1921).

[58] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 91.

[59] Walter Weston, *Mountaineering and Exploration in the Japanese Alps* (London: John Murray, 1896).

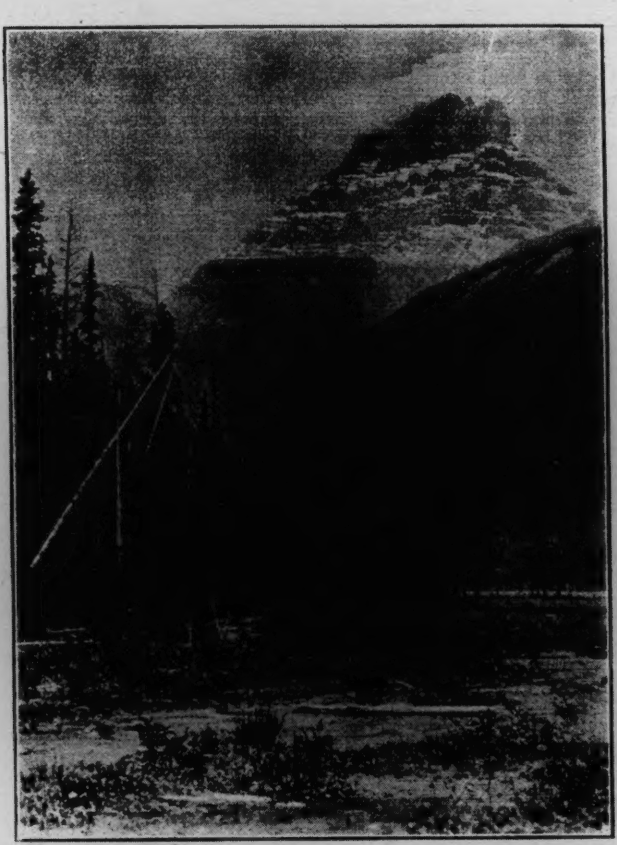

Photo by H. Palmer

MOUNT ALBERTA (11874 ft.) FROM THE S.W.

A Formidable Unclimbed Peak of the Range

Fig. 3 Frontispiece featuring Mt. Alberta from the southwest in J. Monroe Thorington and Howard Palmer's 1921 guidebook, *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada.*

ascent of the Eiger's Mittellegi Ridge. This bold climb made Maki famous in Switzerland and a national hero in Japan.[60] Three years later, Maki obtained a copy of Thorington and Palmer's guidebook and was immediately stirred by the challenge of Mt. Alberta. What had excited the North American climbing fraternity equally inspired the

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[60] Robert William Sandford, "Called by this Mountain: The Legend of the Silver Ice Axe and the Climbing History of Mount Alberta," *Mountain* 3, 2 (Summer 2000): 10.

Japanese, who, under Maki's leadership, launched their first overseas expedition to the Canadian Rockies in 1925.

Reasoning correctly that July would be the best month for an attempt, Maki's six-person party departed from Yokohama on a steamer bound for Seattle in mid-June. Once there, the group was whisked northward by train to Vancouver, where they boarded a Canadian National Railway (CNR) passenger train and journeyed east over the Columbias to the northern Rockies and Jasper. Arriving on July 6, Maki was impressed by the surrounding geography:

> The station area is still quite rural and only scattered lights could be seen. However, with Jasper town as a centre, 4400 square miles of mountains have been designated as national park and all hunting activities, lumbering, commercial use of space are either restricted or prohibited to keep and preserve the natural splendour.[61]

The group was further impressed by the CNR's newly-constructed Jasper Park Lodge, which Maki compared favourably to the grand hotels of the European Alps. "Inside the lodges there is a splendid summer resort atmosphere, seldom seen in Europe," Maki remarked. "Yet, once you are outdoors, bears are roaming in the untouched forests. The CNR has been endeavouring to build a full-facility summer resort in this mountain area."[62] Taking a page from the CPR's book, the CNR had, just that season, specially imported two professional mountain guides—Heinrich Fuhrer and Hans Kohler of Switzerland—to spend their summers at the hotel to promote mountain climbing in the local vicinity. Well aware of Maki's earlier feat on the Eiger, Fuhrer and Kohler were keen to join the Japanese initiative. With them, at Fuhrer's request, came Jean Weber, an amateur climber of high regard from Switzerland who was visiting the Jasper region (see Fig. 4).

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[61] Qtd. in Robert William Sandford, *Called by this Mountain: The Legend of the Silver Ice Axe and the Early Climbing History of Mount Alberta* (Canmore: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Japanese Alpine Club, 2000), 7.

The Japanese and Swiss departed Jasper on July 11 with a pack train of thirty-nine horses and five wranglers under the guidance of Cliff Rollins, a cowboy from Bowden, Alberta.[63] The outfit made good time following the Athabasca River Valley southwards, managing to edge past several forest fires burning in the valley's upper reaches. It was a dry summer in the Rockies. The fire hazard was such that park officials requested that the group be especially cautious with cigar and cigarette butts. To alleviate the concern, the resourceful wranglers attached a tin can on each saddle so that members of the outfit could still enjoy a smoke while riding. The group seemed well disposed to eke every bit of possible pleasure from the trip. The Japanese members, for instance, were quick to acquire "a terrible fluency in the cursing horsewrangler [*sic*] language," which, "when it helped to animate a somewhat dreary or even dangerous position," gave the whole party endless amusement.[64] Nearing the headwaters of the Athabasca River after a week of riding, the outfit established a camp on the open gravel flats near the mouth of Habel Creek. In clear view at the head of the valley stood the pyramidal Mt. Columbia, the second highest peak in the Rockies, beside which, to the left, stood North and South Twin, also peaks of excelling heights. But neither Columbia nor the Twins, in the minds of the climbers, could equal the impression cast by Mt. Alberta, standing alone (and

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[62] Ibid., 7.

[63] The pack train was arranged through Fred Brewster's Jasper outfitting company. Along with Rollins, the packers included Jimmie Swift, the youngest son of Lewis Swift of Jasper, Ray Butler, also of Jasper, "Swede" Anderson, an older wrangler named Donald McDonald, and camp cook George Camp.

[64] Jean Weber, "Conquering Mount Alberta, 1925," *AAJ* 8 (1953): 449.

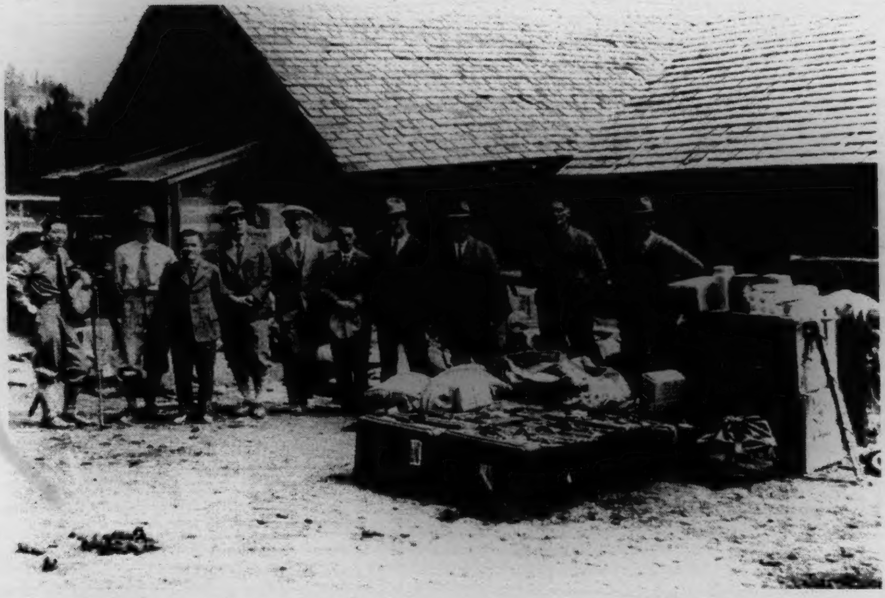

Fig. 4 The Japanese expedition just before it set out at Jasper Park Lodge. Left to right: photographer Nagatane Okabe, geologist and geographer Masanobu Hatano, botanist and artist Yukio Mita, expedition doctor Tanezo Hayakawa, expedition secretary Seiichi Hashimoto, leader Yuko Maki, outfitter Fred Brewster, mountain guide Heinrich Fuhrer, Jean Weber, and guide Hans Kohler. Photograph, July 1925. Courtesy of the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives, JMPA 17-3.

unclimbed) in the northeast.[65]

Their first view was demoralizing. The possibility of a route up Alberta's north and west sides was not apparent to either Fuhrer or Maki. However, further investigation of the mountain's south-eastern flank, from Habel Creek, inspired some hope. Placing another camp higher up the Habel drainage, beneath Alberta's southeast buttress, the group best positioned themselves for an attempt. Above them, the east face rose in tiers of fluted buttresses that were largely composed of unstable, shattered limestone. The quality of the rock left much to be desired. About the mountain's lower "yellow band," Weber recalled that "with every step disappeared our shoes almost up to the ankle in this very loose rubbish which by the mere touch took up a flowing motion down the steep grade and disappeared over precipices." Similarly, above the distinctive yellow band, through the steeper black towers, where the group's climbing ability was most severely tested, "every gripp [*sic*] had the tendency to remain in the hand a piece of sharp edged gravel."[66] Eventually, a prominent snow couloir was gained that led the climbers to a small, wildly-exposed notch on the southern end of Alberta's narrow, kilometre-long summit ridge.

After sixteen hours of difficult climbing, on July 22, 1925, the Japanese and Swiss team successfully surmounted the peak's technical obstacles and became the first mountaineers to reach the top of Mt. Alberta. Photographs were taken on the summit and Maki commemorated the achievement by building a small, customary cairn. In the stone monument, he placed a ceremonial ice axe, brought just for that purpose, and a note on which Maki thanked the guides, listed the expedition members, and concluded with the statement, "we came from Japan so far called by this charming great mountain."[67]

Although they employed the services of professional Swiss guides, the Japanese also made use of specialized equipment then popular in Europe, such as a stone chisel, a

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[65] Ibid.: 451-52.

[66] Ibid.: 462-64.

[67] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 105. Soon after the Japanese ascent, a rumour began to circulate in the Rockies that the axe left behind on the summit was made of pure silver and had been placed on the summit by the orders of the Emperor of Japan himself. In fact, it was an ordinary ice axe and has since been recovered, along with Maki's register, surprisingly preserved, by the second-ascent party in 1948. See Fred D. Ayres, "The Second Ascent of Mt. Alberta," *CAJ* 32 (1949): 1-13. Thankfully, the second ascentionists, Americans Fred Aryres and John Oberland, had the integrity to donate the axe and register to an organization appreciative of their importance: the museum of the American Alpine Club (AAC) in New York. Forty years later, Canadian Greg Horne found the axe tied up in a bundle under a table in the club's archive. He worked with Edith Gourley to have the artefact repatriated to Jasper in 1995. Due to their efforts, the famed ice axe is now part of the permanent collection at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives (JYMA), Jasper, Alberta. Although the AAC was also in possession of Maki's summit register, and had planned to donate it to the JYMA, as well, it was unfortunately lost when the club moved its entire holdings from New York to Golden, Colorado, in 1994. A photograph and negative of the register exist at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Alberta (WMCR M200/AC 090M/031). I am grateful to Meghan Powers at the JYMA and Jacqueline Hutchison for supplying much of this information.

rock hammer, special rock-climbing shoes with felt soles, and a number of iron pitons, which were "driven where natural grips were suspicious by their absence."[68] Exuberant but exhausted, the Japanese and Swiss climbers were forced to spend the night on the exposed summit ridge above 3,000 metres. The following morning, they used four pitons to set up abseils to speed their descent; nevertheless, it was another sixteen hours before they made it off the mountain.[69] In the years that followed the triumphant Japanese expedition, several attempts were made by others to reach the mountain's elusive summit, but none were successful. In fact, it took over twenty years for climbers to repeat what is now called the "Japanese Route" up Alberta's east face.[70]

The 1925 edition of the *CAJ* buried this accomplishment deep in the back pages, stating uninterestedly that "in July Mr. Yuko Maki and five companions, all members of the Japanese Alpine Club, with Swiss guides, H. Fuhrer an H. Kohler, and the Swiss Amateur, J. Weber, made the first ascent of Mt. Alberta and also of Mt. Woolley. This is the first organized Japanese expedition in the Canadian Rockies."[71] No mention was made of the innovative techniques employed to climb Mt. Alberta. In the *Alpine Journal* (English), American Howard Palmer sniffed that the party "are to be congratulated on their good fortune in scratching a victory when this austere peak was off guard."[72] Ironically, Palmer had co-authored the guidebook that inspired the Japanese to come to

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[68] Ibid., 104.

[69] An "abseil" is a method of descending a rock or ice face by sliding down a rope. This method, today, is usually referred to as rappelling. The lengthy time required to get off the mountain was, no doubt, due to the large size of the party.

[70] See Fred D. Ayres, "The Second Ascent of Mt. Alberta," *CAJ* 32 (1949): 1-13.

[71] *CAJ* 15 (1925): 134.

[72] Quoted in Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 260.

Canada in the first place. To add insult to injury, Palmer, Joseph Hickson (the acting president of the ACC), and guide Conrad Kain had unsuccessfully attempted Mt. Alberta in 1924.[73] Although foul conditions forced an abrupt end to their attempt, Palmer had been given little chance of succeeding in weather fair or foul.[74]

A quarter-century after the Japanese ascent, remarks made by the renowned British mountaineer Frank Smythe in *Climbs of the Canadian Rockies* (1950) revealed particular disdain for their success. A purported "purist," Smythe discredited the Japanese because three Swiss guides were "specially imported for the occasion," the expedition "must have cost an enormous sum of money," and the climb "was made in the honour and advancement of Japan."[75] Smythe's comments are rather perplexing given the role he played on three large-scale British "conquests" of Mount Everest as a team member in 1933, 1936, and 1938.[76] Perhaps his anti-Japanese sentiment stemmed from the Second World War. Nevertheless, Smythe continued to huff: "mountaineering is a great sport, and its struggle is a personal one between man and mountain. May it never be degraded, as have been other sports, by the international chauvinism…."[77] Smythe made these comments immediately after he made an unsuccessful attempt of Mt. Alberta in 1946.

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[73] Despite their failed attempt of Mt. Alberta, the three continued north and successfully ascended, for the first time, the East Ridge of Mount Edith Cavell, a route that is now consider by many to be a classic. A.J. Gilmour and E.W. Holway first ascended Cavell via the West Ridge in 1915. See Sean Dougherty, *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1991), 283-4.

[74] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 91.

[75] Frank S. Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950), 67.

[76] Unsworth, *Everest*, 587-88.

[77] Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, 68.

The Japanese feat stunned the North American climbing community and initiated the eclipse of the heady golden age of mountaineering in Canada. "Mt. Alberta nagged at the vanguard in Canada," noted Richard Langlais,

> for the scale of its technical demands brought into question both the prowess of their past achievements and their current stature among the world's mountaineers…. Not only did it signal the dawn of a new level of technical expertise, and, hence, the end of excuses for ignoring certain challenges, but it stunningly punctured the provincial complacency that depended on the Rocky Mountains being 'ours.'[78]

Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s, international climbing in the Canadian ranges had declined. The period of easy scrambles to impressive summits had exhausted itself in the Rockies. Older climbers were lured to the larger ranges of the world where their elementary abilities could still win them significant-sounding accolades.[79] For instance, over two-thirds of the entire 1925 edition of the *CAJ* was devoted to the first ascent of Mt. Logan. With the successful ascent of Alaska's Mt. McKinley by Americans in the late spring of 1913, Mt. Logan, situated in the Yukon Territory's St. Elias Range, had become the highest unclimbed mountain in North America. The account meticulously documented and celebrated what Wheeler considered "an endeavour to take a place among the more prominent alpine organizations of the world," specifically the Alpine Club, whose supreme efforts were directed towards Mt. Everest.[80]

The idea to climb the mountain was reportedly first suggested by Wheeler in the summer of 1913, during the evening after Kain, MacCarthy, and Foster successfully scaled Mt. Robson. Speaking to ACC members around the campfire on the shores of

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[78] Langlais, "Alpinism or Nationalism": 54.

[79] Ibid.: 54.

[80] Arthur O. Wheeler, "A Few More Words of Appreciation," *CAJ* 15

Berg Lake celebrating the successful ascent, Wheeler, equating the biggest with the best, proclaimed, "And now for Canada's highest, Mt. Logan!"[81] In the years following 1913, however, the question of climbing Mt. Logan naturally remained in abeyance. Those who attended Wheeler's cheery campfire party below the glacial moraines of Mt. Robson were soon engulfed in the tragedy of the First World War. Not until 1922, amid a period of growing national enthusiasm, did the idea of climbing Mt. Logan resurface.[82]

The 1925 Mt. Logan expedition was a meticulously organized, large-scale siege. In fact, over the span of two years, it involved three separate expeditions: an initial reconnaissance during the summer of 1924, a freighting expedition the following winter to shuttle needed supplies and equipment to the base of the mountain, and, finally, the climbing expedition in the late spring of 1925.[83] The composition of the expedition, as stated in the 1925 *CAJ*, reflected the international nature of the climbing fraternity in "so far as the *English-speaking* mountaineering world was involved."[84] Members belonged to not only the ACC, but also the AAC and the Alpine Club.[85]

(1925): 9.

[81] Foster, "The Story of the Expedition": 47; MacCarthy, "Preliminary Explorations": 27.

[82] The decision to climb Canada's highest peak was finally made in November 1923, at the first meeting of the Mount Logan Executive Committee, held in Vancouver. The proceedings came at the request of Toronto professor and explorer Arthur P. Coleman, who, during his term as the president of the ACC, took the occasion of an annual club camp, held earlier that year in the Larch Valley south of Lake Louise, to form a directing committee that consisted of the elite members of the ACC.

[83] The main obstacle was the mountain's remote location. Not only was the route to the summit unknown, but the country surrounding the peak, although partially travelled, was still largely unexplored; moreover, the mountain lay 240 km from the nearest human habitation.

[84] J.W.A. Hickson, "An Appreciation," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 7.

[85] Other funding agencies were the Royal Geographical Society, the Geological Survey of Canada, and the CPR.

The climbing expedition was an epic feat of endurance. After spending more than a month on the mountain, the party, which included both Albert MacCarthy and William Foster of Robson fame, ascended the final ridge and stood on Mt. Logan's true summit on the evening of June 23, 1925, completing, what is now called, the "King Trench Route." The return to civilization took over two weeks and the party, some of whom were snow-blind, frostbitten, and on the brink of exhaustion, was plagued by disaster at every turn. Somehow writing in his diary, MacCarthy, the expedition leader, observed the extent to which his party was in need of treatment: "Foster busy treating and bandaging frozen fingers and toes, all first joints on my fingers and thumbs frostbitten and turning black, Lambart's toes frozen, Foster's big toe and two fingers, Carpe two toes and two fingers, Andy one finger…."[86]

The details of their achievement thrilled the international mountaineering establishment. For example, in a discussion that took place after the reading of expedition deputy-leader Fred Lambart's paper before the Royal Geographical Society in 1926, Tom Longstaff, the famed British Himalayan mountaineer, claimed, "I doubt if greater difficulties have been overcome on any mountain." Edward Norton, leader of the ill-fated 1924 British Everest expedition, added, "the conquest of a mountain of the magnitude of Mount Logan in those latitudes, and at the very first attempt, must stand alone—a unique performance in the annals of mountain exploration."[87] England's *Alpine Journal* stated, "greater hardships have probably never been experienced in any mountaineering expedition."[88]

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[86] Albert MacCarthy, "The Climb," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 79.

[87] *Geographic Journal* LXVIII (July 1926): 24-5.

Despite their celebrated reception, however, Jones keenly observed, "the official accounts played down or omitted obvious questions about the *reasons* for the hardships," suggesting that certain elementary errors in judgement, made by the team members during the expedition, inflated the seemingly paramount challenge of the ascent.[89] Nowhere in the hefty volume of the *CAJ* for 1925 were such speculations considered—the climbers appeared ruggedly stoic and incapable of error. Wheeler, for example, wrote an introduction for the official account, and, in a classically imperial tone, set the stage for the heroics of the event: "The stories here told are replete with high hope, invincible courage, set determination with vitality at its lowest, despair, and then triumph of success. No little band of heroes could have shown all these fine qualities in a more marked form."[90]

The "mission" accomplished little in terms of the advancement of North American mountaineering. "This was one case where success came not so much because of the technical performance of the climbers," noted Canadian mountaineering writer Bruce Fairley, "but through impeccable organization and control of logistics—the sort of military-style fastidiousness which is quite out of fashion in Western mountaineering circles today."[91] Although the expedition was unguided, the siege-style technique employed was not new or innovative; rather, it emulated older pre-war tactics that were developed by Arctic explorers and, later, by climbers on mounts McKinley and Everest.[92]

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[88] *AJ* 37 (1925): 24-5.

[89] Jones, *Climbs in North America*, 90.

[90] Wheeler, *A Few More Words of Appreciation*: 10.

[91] Bruce Fairley, "The First Ascent of Mount Logan," *Canadian Mountaineering Anthology: Stories from 100 Years at the Edge*, ed. Bruce Fairly (Edmonton: Lone Pine, 1994), 130.

The style employed is hardly surprising, however, given that the members of the party belonged, predominantly, to an older generation of climbers: both MacCarthy and Foster, for example, were forty-nine years of age. In addition, the chief advisors to the climbing team were none other than Belmore Brown, of Mt. McKinley fame, and Edward O. Wheeler, son of Arthur O. Wheeler and a surveyor on the 1921 British reconnaissance of Mt. Everest. Although it is fair to assert that the struggle for Mt. Logan was, perhaps, as Chic Scott suggested, "the greatest feat of endurance in the story of Canadian mountaineering," to take it further and frame it as an apogee of alpinism is a misrepresentation of the sport.[93]

Nowhere is the resistance of an older generation to the inevitable reinvention of alpinism more evident than in the representation of the first ascents of mounts Alberta and Logan. As the institutional structure of early alpine sport in Canada, the ACC aggressively ensured the continuity and form of mountaineering by asserting the ethics, form, and style of *their* activity, primarily through the alpine journal. Outside the membership, however, there existed no way to enforce such a code, for, as Donnelly noted, "any restriction would also have flown in the face of the free spirit of discovery and exploration."[94] Canada remained predominantly isolated from the modern developments that occurred in the international climbing community for the majority of the early twentieth century, despite the mighty stamp of a golden age.

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[92] See Herschel C. Parker, "Conquering Mt. McKinley: The Parker-Brown Expedition of 1912," *CAJ* 5 (1913): 11-9.

[93] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 101.

[94] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 241.

CHAPTER TWO

Storming the Heights: Canadian Frontier Nationalism and the Making of Manhood in the Conquest of Mount Robson, 1906-1913

> *To any man of sound muscles and healthy instincts a snowy peak is a challenge and the higher the peak, and the more difficult its ascent, the more powerful its attraction.*[1]
>
> A.P. Coleman

Within late nineteenth-century popular imagination, the "frontiersman" took on a variety of different forms associated with the quintessential virtues of masculinity within the context of frontier adventure. Canadian images of the frontiersman generally focused on the pioneer or trapper—"real men" whose everyday lives exemplified virtues of strength and resourcefulness amid the harsh conditions of the wild colonial landscape. Similarly, in *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (1993), Robert H. MacDonald noted that "the American ideal set the image of the Anglo-Saxon adventurer: a Stetson hat and a cowboy neckerchief marked his uniform, and the frontiers of the world, from the Philippines to the plains of Patagonia, were his testing ground."[2] During the nineteenth century, narratives of adventure complemented and endorsed imperialist discourse—the frontier was posited as the unknown, the frontiersman was the youthful, imperial hero figure, and the conquest of territory, Native, or mountain peak typified the heroic deed.[3] In Canada, the social currency of such mythic ideals informed and inspired early youth movements, such as the Boy Scouts and the Young Men's Christian Association, transformed artist Tom Thomson from a Toronto-based suburbanite into a modern reincarnated *coureur-de-bois*, and hoisted such "Canadian" characters as Grey Owl to international acclaim.[4] Despite extensive urbanization and industrialization during the early-twentieth century, Canada was still imagined "as an untamed country filled with rugged, virile men."[5]

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[1] Qtd. in Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 38.

[2] Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 32.

This chapter provides a case study of the emergence and development of alpine sport in Canada in order to show that mountaineering in the Canadian ranges was not merely an offshoot of older Victorian traditions, but, rather, a complex mixture of individual motivations and cultural contexts that were specific and unique to the shifting physical and ideological landscape of North America. In both practice and ideal, early alpine climbing in Canada not only embodied its Victorian heritage, but also reinforced existing notions of a frontier ideal that imagined Canada as wilderness space invigorated with a youthful pioneering spirit—a powerful symbol of masculine invention—from which the national definition has long been drawn.[6] It combines an emphasis on the construction of mountaineering as a cultural form during the 1886-1925 period, recently popularized as "the glory days of Canadian mountaineering," with attention to the shape in which the sport was institutionalized by The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC).[7]

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[3] Ibid., 119.

[4] David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Ross D. Cameron, "Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 10 (2000): 186.

[5] Cameron, "Tom Thomson": 187.

[6] Ibid.: 187.

Although the myth of the frontier permeated the ideals of early Anglo-Canadian society, it had to be nurtured through the invention of stories that took place beyond the imagined boundaries of the known, where Kiplingesque heroes tested their strength and asserted their "manly" power. In early mountaineering literature, the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*) became an important forum for the circulation and publicization of tales of athletic conquest, scientific intrigue, and romantic exploration, which, like social myth, "concealed and made veritable the ideology that lay behind it, justifying imperialism and masculine power."[8] An analysis of one such story—the drama and controversy surrounding the disputed first ascent of Mount Robson in 1909—places on view the network of imperialism, modernity, and gender that early Canadian sport contributed to the invention of the Canadian frontier.[9]

The Growth and Expansion of Anglo-Saxon Mountaineering

Early mountaineering in Canada developed from origins of the sport in the European Alps during the mid-nineteenth century. Writing in the *CAJ*, Gina La Force points out that "although the odd scientist or thrill seeker had long been braving the mountains, it was the initial wave of English tourists taking advantage of the new train routes into the Alps who formed the first body of mountaineers."[10] Along with the development of new technologies, two important—seemingly contradictory—sociological factors also played a critical role. The first of these was the development of industrial capitalism in Britain, which created an expanded middle class: a largely urban, professional stratum that had the time and financial resources for extended outdoor pursuits.[11] Along with urbanization, however, came a sense of alienation among the middle classes, as British society became seemingly wealthy yet unmanly. Ultimately, such a sense translated into the invention of progressively more aggressive forms of gentlemanly culture.[12] This professional stratum provided many of the founders and early recruits to the all-male Alpine Club, formed in 1857, "so that mountaineering enthusiasts could share their broad interests in climbing, making scientific investigations in the alpine regions, and capturing their mountain experiences with pen and brush."[13] From its inception through to the early twentieth century, the London-based Alpine Club comprised a homogenous group drawn overwhelmingly from the middle classes, particularly from the "genteel professions," which included bankers, barristers, civil servants, clergymen, country gentleman, businessmen, and scholars.[14]

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[7] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 38.

[8] MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire*, 205.

[9] The terms "sport" and "sports," are used throughout this study to reflect what sport-historian Bruce Kidd calls "distinct creations of modernity, fashioned and continually refashioned in the revolutionary conditions of industrial capitalist societies." Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 12.

In a sociological study of early British mountaineering, between 1850 and 1914, David Robbins contended that "to analyse sport as culture is to establish what its practice signifies to adherents, to examine the ways in which the sport is invested with these meanings and how they may change over time." To further this thesis, Robbins went on to illustrate that the cultural world of Victorian mountaineering was constructed around three, often conflicting, discourses, conveniently labelled scientism, athleticism, and romanticism.[15] Scientism, he asserted, was a principal motivating factor behind the sport's inception; most climbing practices before 1850 proceeded with scientific intentions, primarily those of cartography and glaciology. Institutionalized in the spirit of science, the Alpine Club strongly aligned itself with other learned, "gentlemanly" clubs, such as the Royal Geographical Society, jointly promoting scientific colloquiums, lectures, and publications.

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[10] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 39.

[11] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class": 585-86.

[12] Hansen, "Albert Smith": 304.

[13] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 39.

[14] Hansen, "Albert Smith": 310-11.

Although the Alpine Club retained scientism in its mandate, its association with science was gradually eclipsed by an emerging athletic rationale, which emphasized the virtues of the moral and physical improvements derived from sport. It also clearly reflected emerging ideals of manhood. The mid-Victorian bourgeoisie showed the deepest concern for manhood in its moral, social, and political meanings, but also, by the late nineteenth century, placed a new emphasis on physical strength and health:

> The male body moved to the center of men's gender concerns; manly passions were revalued in a favourable light; men began to look at "primitive" sources of manhood with new regard; the martial virtues attracted admiration; and competitive impulses were transformed into male virtues.[16]

By this new understanding, mountaineering, according to Robbins, "remains a 'rational' recreation, not because it increases the individual's knowledge and appreciation of the natural world, but because it cultivates such qualities as physical fitness and courage in the face of danger and adversity."[17] At the centre of this principle was a discourse of rewards—recognizable status symbols—based on competition, moral fitness, mastery over nature, and manliness. Actively promoted by mid-to late-Victorian public schools, neo-Spartan ideals of masculinity spread throughout the English-speaking world and beyond and complemented the imperialist doctrine of exploration and expansion.[18]

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[15] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class": 587-88.

[16] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from Revolution to Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 222.

Nevertheless, despite the seemingly unchallenged predominance of athleticism in the early mountaineering ethos, by the 1870s, a new conflicting discourse arose, one exemplified by a decidedly romantic group who emphasized the moral and spiritual significance associated with mountain spaces and experiences. Running in apparent contradiction to both scientism and athleticism, romanticism remained a noticeable but somewhat subsidiary discourse of the sport. Of critical importance was the productive tension among the three underlying ideological motivations that allowed for the consolidation of the middle and upper classes and provided a site of negotiation for broader culture. "In resolving such conflicts," Robbins suggested, "the sport did not so much reflect the common sense of the Victorian period as provide one of the many sites at which it was constituted."[19] Drawing from Robbins, British historian Peter H. Hansen suggested that, rather than passively receiving an older gentlemanly culture, middle-class men "actively constructed an assertive masculinity to uphold their sense of Britain's imperial power."[20] This was achieved through the invention of various aggressive forms of middle-class gentlemanly culture, such as mountaineering in the Alps.

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[17] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class": 589.

[18] See J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (London: Cass Edition, 2000); J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (London: Cass Edition, 1998); and J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 2-4.

[19] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class": 597.

Enthused by the romantic writings of Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, and Ruskin, Victorian mountaineering experienced tremendous growth amongst not only Europeans, but also among vacationing American socialites, who, in 1873, founded their own fellowship, the Appalachian Mountain Club. As the popularity of the sport grew, by the end of the century, British and American climbers actively sought new, unclimbed challenges in the farther ranges of Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. In the Canadian mountain ranges, for instance, British and American climbers led the way, as Canadians had not yet succumbed to the lure of alpinism.[21] The few Canadians who were climbing mountains—mostly western explorers and railway surveyors—usually did so with plane tables under their arms in order to take painstaking measurements from the summits.[22]

Yet, the Canadian ranges, unlike those of Europe, were situated within a vast expanse of predominantly unexplored territory.[23] In the fall of 1885, however, when the last spike was driven to complete the transcontinental railway that opened the Canadian West, passengers on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) saw for the first time such sights as Lake Louise, which lies amid some of the greatest peaks in the Rockies (mounts Victoria, Lefroy, and Temple), and Rogers Pass, where mounts Sir Donald, Tupper,

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[20] Hansen, "Albert Smith": 303-04.

[21] Bruce Fairley, ed., *Canadian Mountaineering Anthology: Stories from 100 years at the Edge* (Vancouver: Lone Pine Publishing, 1994), 9.

[22] See I.S. MacLaren, with Eric Higgs and Gabrielle Zezulka-Mailloux, *Mapper of Mountains: M.P. Bridgland in the Canadian Rockies, 1902-1930* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2006), 1-44.

Dawson, and other giants of the Columbia Mountains paint the horizon. To lower the colossal debt incurred from building the railway, the CPR initiated a cost recovery scheme that introduced and aggressively promoted tourism to "the Canadian Alps," particularly the Rocky and Columbia Mountains. Opening resorts along the newly-constructed line, at Banff, Lake Louise, and Glacier (Rogers Pass), the CPR imported professional Swiss guides to lead hikers, sightseers, and climbers into the mountains, guaranteeing safety.[24] With Canadians slowly beginning to take up alpine pursuits, it was only a matter of time before the idea of a Canadian club took shape.

The Alpine Club of Canada and the Conquest for Mount Robson

In 1906, the ACC formed, in part, as a reaction to a suggestion made by Charles E. Fay, then president of the Appalachian Mountain Club and founder of the American Alpine Club in 1903. Fay recommended calling the club "The Alpine Club of North America" of which there would be a Canadian section.[25] Such a suggestion, historian PearlAnn Reichwein noted, "ultimately prompted Canadian nationalists to renew the drive for a properly Canadian alpine club." Reichwein refers chiefly to Elizabeth Parker,

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[23] First Nations peoples had been crossing the mountain passes by way of established trade routes for thousands of years.

[24] One of the deciding factors in the CPR's decision to hire professional guides and bring them to Canada was the death of American climber Philip S. Abbot, which resulted from a fall during an attempt of Mt. Lefroy in 1886. Abbot's death caused considerable controversy and media attention concerning the dangers of mountaineering. See Charles Sproull Thompson, "Mt. Lefroy, August 3, 1896," *Appalachia* 2, 1 (1897).

[25] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 66.

who, although not a mountaineer herself, was a staunch nationalist and, with Arthur O. Wheeler, a co-founder of the ACC.[26]

Wheeler was an Irish-born surveyor and mapmaker with the Dominion Lands Survey. Devoting his early life to the federal civil service, Wheeler travelled extensively through the little-known regions of the western frontier in the service of the Topographical Survey Branch of the Department of the Interior. He became an accomplished photographer and mountaineer, to the extent that, in 1902, Sir Sanford Fleming sponsored his admission into the prestigious and genteel ranks of the Royal Geographical Society.[27] In 1905, Wheeler published *The Selkirk Range*, which became the first comprehensive geographical study of the region and a grand achievement in early Canadian mountaineering literature. Although Wheeler had been advocating the idea of a Canadian alpine club since 1901, it was not until he met the equally determined Parker that plans began to take form.

Vital to the ACC's inception was Parker's occupation as a journalist with the *Manitoba Free Press* in Winnipeg. Lamenting the ~~loss of~~ Canada's national esteem as foreigners continued to claim coveted first ascents in the Rockies, Parker voiced her exasperation publicly:

> How many first ascents have been made by Canadians? It is simply amazing that we leave the hardships and the triumphs of first ascents to foreigners. Even Hindoo [sic] Swami has climbed one of the highest peaks in this region. Canada has not even an Alpine organisation.... Is the mountaineering prestige gained by climbing our high mountains to be held by Americans and Englishmen?[28]

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[26] PearlAnn Reichwein, "Beyond the Visionary Mountains: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Canadian National Park Idea, 1906 to 1969" (PhD Diss., Carleton University, 1995), 60.

[27] Ibid., 55.

[28] Elizabeth Parker, "The Canadian Rockies: A Joy to Mountaineers," *Manitoba Free Press* (23 Sept. 1905): 20.

In another article in the *Manitoba Free Press* later that year, Parker again appealed to nationalism in an effort to spur interest in a distinctly Canadian organization:

> We owe it to our young nationhood in simple self-respect, to begin an organized system of mountaineering on an independent basis. Surely, between Halifax and Victoria, there can be found at least a dozen persons who are made of the stuff, and care enough about our mountain heritage to redeem Canadian apathy and indifference. It is simply amazing that for so long we have cared so little.[29]

According to Reichwein, "Parker connected the mountains to Canadian nationalism, just as opening the west was ideologically linked to strengthening Canada's emerging nationhood."[30] In Parker, Wheeler had found a collaborator, and, in 1905, they together laid the groundwork for the ACC (see Fig. 5).

As in Britain, so in Canada the ideological underpinnings of early alpinism drew heavily from scientific traditions. The foundation of science in Victorian Canada concerned itself primarily with inventory: the methodical surveying of land and resources in an attempt to assess material worth and potential.[31] Such inventory sciences were vital to not only the transcontinental nation-building drive, but also the "imperial archive," the symbolic storage house of collected colonial data, which demonstrated the might of Empire.[32] Such associations were evident within the early objectives of the ACC. Consider the following passage written by Parker, found in the first volume of the *CAJ*:

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[29] Elizabeth Parker, "The Selkirk Range," *Manitoba Free Press* (25 November 1905): 23.

[30] Reichwein, "Beyond Visionary Mountains," 61-8.

[31] Susanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 269.

[32] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 11.

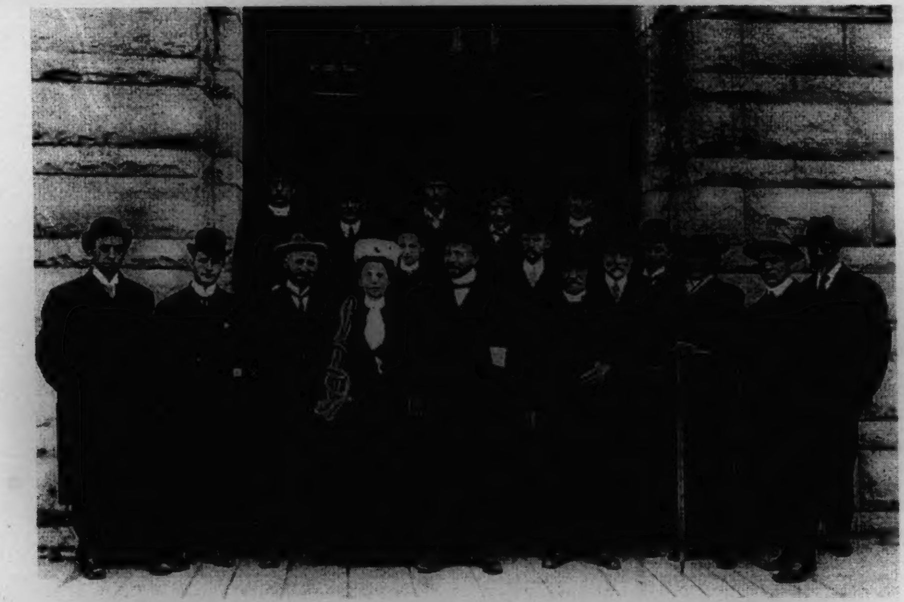

Fig. 5 Unknown. The inaugural meeting of The Alpine Club of Canada. Back row (left to right): Rev. T. Fraser, L.O. Armstrong, Tom Martin, W.H. Belford, and Rev. Alex Gordon. Middle row (left to right): Jean Parker, Stanley Wills, Stanley Mitchell, and L.Q. Coleman. Front row (left to right): J.W. Kelly, W.J. Taylor, A.O. Wheeler, Elizabeth Parker, E.A. Haggen, Rev. J.C. Herdman, A.P. Coleman, Rev. Dean Paget, and William Brewster. Photograph, March 1906. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, ACC AC OP-369.

> The objects of the Club are: (1) The promotion of scientific study and the exploration of Canadian alpine and glacial regions; (2) the cultivation of Art in relation to mountain scenery; (3) the education of Canadians to an appreciation of their mountain heritage; (4) the encouragement of the mountain craft and the opening of new regions as a national playground; (5) the preservation of the natural beauties of the mountain places and of the fauna and flora in their habitat; (6) and the interchange of ideas with other Alpine organizations.[33]

Fusing scientific, romantic, and even nationalistic aspirations, the mandate set forth by the ACC clearly resembled that of its imperial predecessor, the Alpine Club (England).

The implicit subtext of masculine physicality also permeated the club's early ideological underpinnings. Canadian historian Colin Howell noted that the idealization of physicality, during the turn of the twentieth century, became "a veritable religion of its own"; it informed ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority and was clearly linked to the rising tide of nationalism and imperialism in North America.[34] This trope of assertive manliness was signified in mountaineering by recognizable status symbols, such as accredited first ascents, based on (sometimes fierce) competition and mastery over nature's seemingly wildest regions. Again, this was underscored by Parker, who, in the inaugural volume of the *CAJ*, prophesized that "any young man of latent intellectual and moral force, who comes to close to the grips with the waiting, challenging mountains, and puts one summit after another beneath the soles of his feet, has gained immensely in the Spartan virtues."[35]

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[33] Elizabeth Parker, "The Alpine Club of Canada," *CAJ* 1 (1907): 3.

From the early stages of its conception, the ACC had designs for an expedition to attempt the first ascent of Mt. Robson, which, rising to the height of 3,954 metres, is the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. Perceived as the pinnacle of achievement, an ascent of Mt. Robson represented an opportunity for the ACC to redeem Canadian apathy and indifference towards the sport by an act that strongly asserted a national presence in the Canadian ranges. Therefore, at the inaugural meeting of the ACC in March 1906, Wheeler, the president, suggested that Arthur P. Coleman, then the vice-president, attempt Mt. Robson the following year, the ascent of which remains a formidable undertaking even by today's standards.[36] In 1907, the mountain had never even been visited by climbers and seemed extraordinarily remote before the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway in 1912. Nevertheless, for the same reasons that Canadian nationalists pressed for the creation of a "Canadian" alpine club, the ACC set out to claim the coveted first ascent of Mt. Robson.[37]

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[34] Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 106.

[35] Parker, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 7.

[36] William C. Taylor, *Tracks across My Trail: Donald "Curly" Phillips, Guide and Outfitter* (Jasper: Jasper-Yellowhead Historical Society, 1984), 5.

Accompanying Coleman's small reconnaissance party was the Reverend George Kinney, a character whose life would become forever associated with the quest for Mt. Robson. A thirty-five-year-old Methodist minister from Victoria, Kinney had made a remarkable solo ascent of Mt. Stephen in 1904 and had been one of the seventy-nine members to attend the inaugural ACC Summer Mountaineering Camp hosted the previous year at Yoho Pass.[38] As a professed man of strict Protestant principles and ideals, Kinney insisted that he and his companions refrain from all activity on Sundays, including climbing, and his presence was such that even the toughest of trail hands would mind their language, refraining from any profanity.[39]

Near the end of July 1907, a pack train of ten horses left Morley, Alberta, en route for Laggan (now Lake Louise Village) at the official starting point for the expedition. On August 3, Coleman, along with his brother Lucius Q. Coleman, George Kinney, and outfitter Jack Boker, left Laggan heading north towards the Athabasca River. By extending the trail, which the Colemans had themselves pioneered fourteen years before, from the Athabasca River to the Miette River, the party completed the route that became the Icefields Parkway (Highway 93, which connects Lake Louis and Jasper) thirty years later. Of this trip, Kinney wrote the following:

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[37] The derivation of the name "Robson" remains unknown. See T. Gardiner, "The Name 'Mt. Robson,'" *CAJ* 53 (1970): 17-19. *Yuh-hai-has-kun* or the "Mountain of the Spiral Road" (referring to the horizontal rock strata evident on south face) was the name bestowed upon Mt. Robson by the *Texqakallt*, the earliest known inhabitants of the upper reaches of the Fraser River.

[38] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 72. Aside from these details, little is known of Kinney's early years given that it appears his papers, diaries, and photographs have been lost.

[39] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 5.

> For over a month we followed the trail of the wild through the valleys of the Pipestone, Siffleur, Saskatchewan, Sunwapta, Athabasca, Miette and Fraser, crossing the Pipestone, Wilcox and Yellowhead passes. Reaching the mouth of the Grand Forks of the Fraser, we had to chop our way through fallen timber and forest primeval till we camped near the base of the mountain. The hardships of our trip in had delayed us two weeks longer than we had thought.[40]

After thirty-nine days of inclement weather, tricky bushwhacking, and difficult route finding, the climbers finally made camp on the shores of the Robson River, under the southwest face of Mt. Robson (see Fig. 6). The approach, however, had taken longer than expected. When morning broke on the third day with no reprieve from the weather and already heavily taxed for time, the party accepted their loss and left the mountain to return by way of Edmonton.[41]

The next year, the Colemans and Kinney returned to Mt. Robson, this time from Edmonton with John Yates as their outfitter. The approach to the mountain was much easier than in the previous year, because the party could use a clearly marked tote road built to supply westward advancing railroad camps.[42] Once reaching the north side of the mountain, the party discovered the Robson Glacier: a mighty sheet of ice extending from high on the mountain's eastern flank, gently sloping downward for six kilometres in a semi-circle, from east to north, ending at the gravel flats of Robson Pass between Berg Lake and Adolphus Lake (see Fig. 7). In all, from their permanent camp at Robson Pass, they spent three weeks attempting the mountain via the Robson Glacier. During this

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[40] Kinney, "Mount Robson": 1-2.

[41] Ibid.: 2.

[42] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 6.

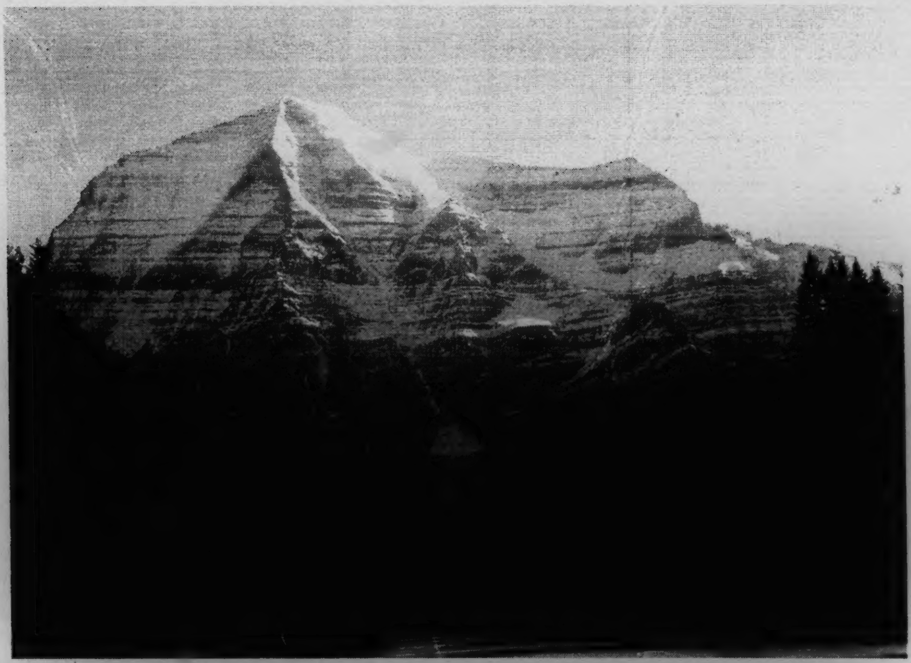

Fig. 6 Author. The southwest face of Mount Robson. The left-hand skyline is now referred to as the Emperor Ridge. Photograph, July 2006.

period, however, there were only two days of good weather, one of which unfortunately fell on a Sunday.[43] During the remaining sixteen days, the party endured storm after storm, weather for which Mt. Robson is now notorious. With time expiring, Kinney grew impatient. Angry and disappointed by the prospect of failing a second time, he set off alone to attempt to push a route up the steep rock cliffs of the mountain's northwest flank, beneath what is now called the Emperor Ridge. After navigating his way around Berg Lake, he scrambled up the scree slopes making his cold bivouac site well above the tree line. In the next morning's "first light of dawn I was storming the heights," Kinney wrote:

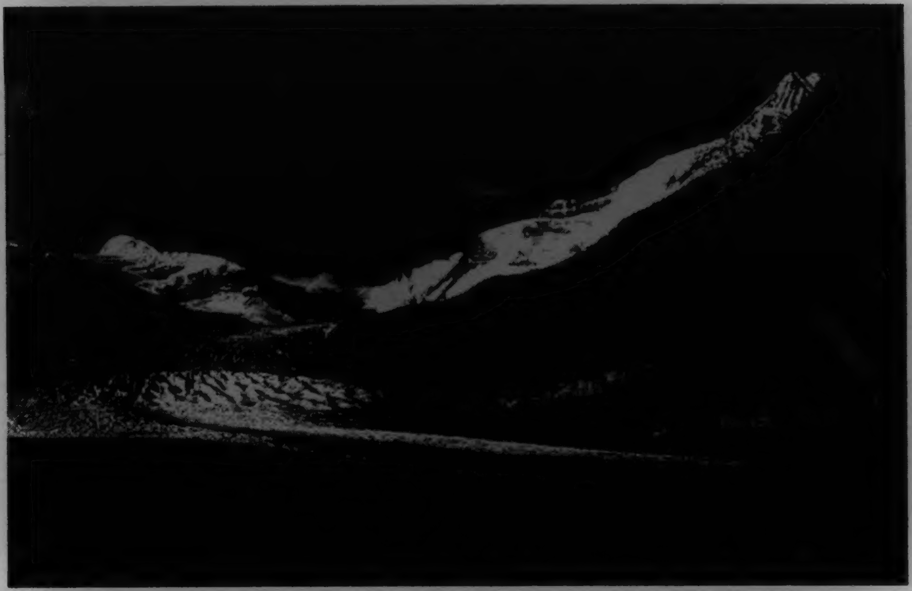

Fig. 7 Author. The Robson Glacier stretching east and north of Mount Robson's east face, seen in the upper right. Photograph, August, 2002.

> For thousands of feet, the great rock towered overhead, fringed and fretted with dripping icicles that hung in masses from overhanging cliffs, sometimes as much as fifty feet in length. Narrow slopes of shale, at the foot of each wall, were as difficult to traverse as the cliffs themselves, for I had to plough knee-deep through freshly-fallen snow.[44]

By mid-morning, Kinney had climbed to the top of the north-west shoulder at 3,048 m. In marginal weather conditions, he continued around the north-west shoulder to reach the upper-western slopes of the mountain, whereupon he encountered gale-force winds. "It was beyond question the fiercest wind I had ever met," Kinney later wrote. "Three different occasions while crossing a long, exposed shale slope, it literally blew me off my

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[43] Paddy Sherman, *Cloud Walkers: Six Climbs on Major Canadian Peaks* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965), 97.

[44] Kinney, "Mount Robson": 4.

feet and tumbled me over; while there were times when I could not force my way against it a single step."[45]

From Kinney's description of the 1908 expedition emerges the popular "man against nature" theme, where the undeterred frontiersman is typically locked in desperate battle with the wild elements of nature. Indicative of popular muscular Christian ideals, Kinney's account continually underscored his seemingly excessive commitment to the task, demonstrating the "manly" virtues of stoicism, hardiness, and endurance.[46] In the end, deteriorating conditions forced Kinney to turn back, but he had nonetheless seen enough of the route to convince himself that it could be pushed to the summit. He later remarked, "it was after dark before I saw the light of our camp fire through the storm; and oh! the hot stew of goat meat was great, after over thirty hours with nothing but cold lunches."[47] Kinney's comment concerning the simple luxuries of camp—shelter, warm food, and fire—underscored his manliness during the harsh deprivations imposed by the mountain, his so-called "adversary." Nevertheless, after twenty-one days and four botched attempts, the Coleman brothers and Kinney were forced once again to turn their backs on the unclimbed Mt. Robson and head for home. Seemingly, a distinct discourse of manliness can be found even when one failed to conquer nature.

The ~~First~~ *Disputed* Ascent, 1909

Missing from Kinney's 1908 account is that, by the end of the second failed expedition, he was completely obsessed with the desire for the first ascent of Mt. Robson.

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[45] Ibid.: 5.

[46] Mangan and Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality*, 3-6.

In 1910, he wrote, "I left the mountain that fall, believing that I had had my last try at it."[48] However, according to the Colemans, this was not quite true.[49] On the journey home in 1908, Kinney arranged with the Colemans to return the following year for yet another attempt. Whatever the arrangements were, they were not honoured. In late May of 1909, Kinney heard news that a small group of foreigners was planning to attempt to climb the peak that summer. Those foreigners happened to be Arnold Mumm, Geoffrey Hastings, Leopold Amery, and the Swiss guide Moritz Inderbinen; it was a party that would concern any climber who came to regard any large, unclimbed peak as his own, for it comprised some of the most revered English climbers of the era.[50]

News of such a party spurred Kinney into action. Alone, with few funds, he set off for Mt. Robson early that spring. Kinney's account of the journey, published in the 1910 *CAJ*, reads like a perilous exploration, set against the odds at all costs. Such masculinist rhetoric stemmed from a long British tradition, in which middle-class men adopted the powerful language of exploration from contemporary colonial explorers in the Arctic and Africa to describe their leisure pursuits. Employing this voice, Kinney described his trip from Edmonton to the Rockies: "For hundreds of miles across the prairies and through mountain vastnesses I fought alone the fearful difficulties of that trip, threading my way across treacherous bog, or swimming my horses across mountain

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[47] Kinney, "Mount Robson": 6-7.

[48] George Kinney and Donald Phillips, "To the Top of Robson," *CAJ* 2, 2 (1910): 22.

[49] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 8.

[50] Sherman, *Cloudwalkers*, 98. Revered in the elite climbing circles of Europe and Empire, the presence of such men illustrated the imperial context of mountaineering pursuits during the early twentieth century.

torrents."[51] The fact that Kinney was mainly travelling on a well-used tote road to supply the advancing railroad went unmentioned in his 1909 narrative. Women and children, as well, were absent from the account, despite the fact that Kinney took rest at the homestead of John Moberly and his family, a popular outpost in the Jasper-Yellowhead region. But "wilderness," for many men of Kinney's age, was often presented as unpeopled and uncivilized—a stark (and purposeful) juxtaposition to the seemingly over-civilized and thereby feminized urban setting.[52] Moreover, wilderness landscapes were often represented as inherently masculine spaces, requiring those who journeyed through them to be endowed with neo-Spartan virtues that were, according to Victorian assumptions, identified as attributes of manliness.

It was at Moberly's cabin that Kinney met his compatriot-to-be, Donald "Curly" Phillips (see Fig. 8). A young man from the heavy bush country around Dorset, Ontario, Phillips was exploring the Jasper region for future trail guiding opportunities and it did not take Kinney long to interest him in the prospects of climbing Mt. Robson. Phillips, however, was not versed in the techniques of climbing nor did he have any equipment. Despite this apparent deficiency, Kinney was quick to enlist his services and, within days, the two departed for the Yellowhead Pass and Mt. Robson beyond. Rather than establishing a camp at Robson Pass, however, the two companions continued west around Berg Lake and established a meagre camp at the foot of Mt. Robson's northwest flank, beneath the possible route that Kinney had viewed during his bold solo attempt the previous year.

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[51] Kinney, "Mount Robson": 23.

[52] For an excellent discussion on the meaning that Canadians have accorded to the idea of wilderness in the Rockies over the last 200 years, see MacLaren, "Cultured Wilderness": 7-58.

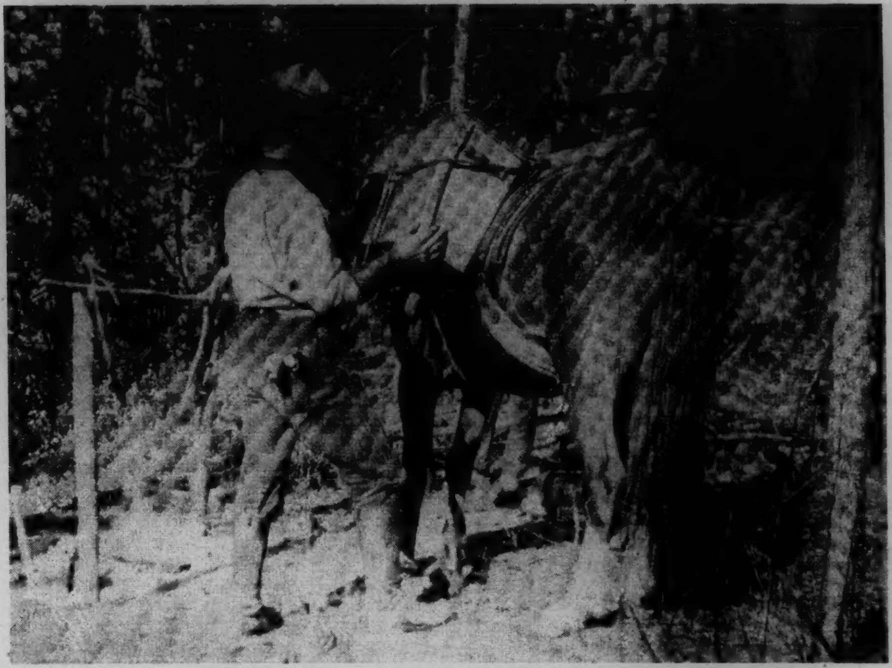

Fig. 8 Byron Harmon. Donald "Curly" Phillips (left) and Rev. George Kinney at the Moberly homestead. Photograph, June 1909. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V263/NA – 6016.

Surviving on a stew of blue grouse and whistlers (marmots), Kinney and Phillips climbed from their base camp, at 1,615 metres, to heights exceeding 3,050 metres more than four times between July 24 and August 12. After four failed attempts, Kinney later wrote, "we got to Camp Robson at the foot of the mountain in a discouraged frame of mind, for we were hundreds of miles from civilization, with scarcely any provisions and the mountain was still unclimbed."[53] On August 13, however, the morning dawned clear and they were off with an early start. Kinney noted that the snow conditions were excellent for climbing and they made good time as they worked their way south across and up the western part of the peak. By mid-morning, clouds began to form with the arrival of strong winds from the south. Despite them, they were higher on the mountain than during any previous attempt and felt compelled to continue. Making their way through the upper cliff bands, they finally arrived just below the main ridge leading to the summit. The climbing, according to Kinney, had been horrendous:

> On all the upper climb we did nearly the whole work on our toes and hands only. The clouds were a blessing in a way, for they shut out the view of the fearful depths below. A single slip any time during that day meant a slide to death. At times the storm was so thick that we could see but a few yards, and the sleet would cut our faces and nearly blind us. Our clothes and hair were one frozen mass of snow and ice.[54]

Above them loomed the immense ranks of rime plumes, now known to climbers as the "gargoyles," which make up the saw-toothed, corniced ridge barring the way to the summit.[55] According to the expedition report, after floundering through the maze of these "treacherous masses," Kinney and Phillips stood, at long last, on the apex of Mt. Robson.[56] Suturing the moment of imperial paramountcy to mountaineering, Kinney triumphantly exclaimed, "in the almighty name of God, by whose strength I have climbed here, I capture this peak, Mount Robson, for my own country, and for the Alpine Club of Canada."[57] Lingering on the summit for only a few moments, the two turned and began the long descent. Because a customary cairn could not be built on the snow-and ice-covered peak, Kinney purportedly cached his Dominion flag along with their summit

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[53] Kinney and Phillips, "To the Top of Robson": 37.

[54] Ibid.: 39.

[55] The prevailing winds being from the south and west, snow, when driven by gale force winds, forms huge cornices along the upper ridge of the mountain that can be seen from over fifteen kilometres away. Such formations, while more common in the ranges of the Yukon and Alaska, are not seen anywhere else in the Rockies.

[56] Kinney and Phillips, "To the Top of Robson": 40

[57] Ibid.: 40.

record in a natural rock cairn, some sixty metres below the summit, somewhere high in the northwest bowl.[58]

The ~~Second~~ *First* Ascent, 1913

Kinney and Phillips, however, were never given credit for the first ascent of Mt. Robson. In fact, Arthur Wheeler, who decided what would or would not gain entry into the record book, held his hand for four years concerning Kinney's claim.[59] This was long enough for Austrian guide Conrad Kain, along with his clients, Albert "Mack" MacCarthy and William Wasborough "Billy" Foster, to secure the first ascent for the club in 1913. What was it that made Wheeler disbelieve Kinney's claim, or prompted him to distance the ACC from Kinney?

On behalf of the ACC, Wheeler organized a scientific expedition to create a photo-topographical survey of the Mt. Robson area in 1911. In keeping with the mandate of the club, which promoted scientific study and exploration, Wheeler felt that the Jasper-Yellowhead region had much to offer. With the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway beginning to push through towards Yellowhead Pass, Wheeler decided that the ACC should take advantage of the situation; additionally, such an expedition served to lay the groundwork for a special ACC mountaineering camp later held at the foot of Robson in 1913. Accompanying Wheeler were Kain as guide, Byron Harmon as photographer, Phillips as outfitter, and Kinney as the general assistant, among others.

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[58] Ibid.: 40.

[59] Zac Robinson, "The Golden Years of Canadian Mountaineering: Asserted Ethics, Style, and Form, 1886-1925," *Sport History Review* 35, 1 (2004): 9.

During the 1911 survey expedition, several noteworthy events occurred reflecting Wheeler's growing ambivalence towards Kinney. The most obvious was the first ascent of Mount Resplendent, made by Kain and Harmon with Wheeler's permission. The climb was significant for two reasons: first, during the survey, Kinney and Kain were planning an ascent of Mt. Robson by way of the eastern flank. Given that "virgin peaks" surrounded them, this seemed a strange objective during a period when first ascents were of prime order.[60] Secondly, Kinney was excluded from the Mt. Resplendent climb: "Kinney received scarce mention in Wheeler's account of the expedition," observed William C. Taylor. "He is found painting boulders, washing dishes and carrying surveying instruments, but not climbing. It was a disappointing role for the alleged conqueror of Mount Robson."[61]

Another remarkable event that occurred during the survey was Kain's first ascent of Whitehorn Mountain. Under the harsh climbing restrictions put in place by Wheeler, Kain disappeared late one afternoon and did not return that evening. Reappearing the next morning, Kain informed the chagrined Wheeler that he had made the first ascent, partially in darkness, of the neighbouring Whitehorn Mountain. Commenting on Wheeler's reaction, Kinney wrote,

> Wheeler was wrothy but could not do anything. He claimed Kain was crazy, and that his climb would not be recognized, but later on his cairn and records were found on the peak of Whitehorn, and Wheeler was robbed of the privilege of farming out the "first climb" to some ambitious climber later on.[62]

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[60] Ibid.: 9.

[61] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 35.

[62] Ibid., 35.

Wheeler's response is significant in showing the scrutiny with which first ascents were adjudicated at the time; it also showed that one's word was *not* sufficient evidence and that credible witnesses were required. One should have summit photographs, build cairns, or, at the very least, provide an accurate description of the route followed.[63] What is also noteworthy was Wheeler's power to decide who could climb what mountains, illustrating that the ACC was, arguably, Wheeler's private syndicate in these years.

Wheeler had always questioned the Kinney/Phillips ascent. In fact, he wrote to Kinney immediately after the 1909 climb requesting that he produce evidence "that the world could not challenge."[64] Wheeler's was a strange demand in a time when a gentleman's word, particularly that of a minister, was valued until proven otherwise. But Wheeler made no secret of the fact that he disapproved of Kinney's choice of route and partner. Writing in the 1912 *CAJ*, Wheeler stated that the "route looked impossible, and certainly one of tremendous peril." "Kinney," in Wheeler's opinion,

> took a desperate last chance and succeeded. He has been criticized rather severely by *practical mountaineers* [emphasis mine] for taking on so extremely dangerous a climb a companion who had no previous experience. Had it been any other man the criticism would hold good, but Phillips is a natural athlete and quite the equal of Kinney as a mountaineer.[65]

Remember, Kinney was to return to the mountain in 1909 with Coleman, who proceeded under the direct request from Wheeler to secure the peak for the club. "In English climbing circles," Taylor pointed out, "Kinney's failure to honour these plans would have been a gross breach of climbing etiquette."[66] Considering the slap-and-dash nature of the climb, without careful planning, without the assistance of a Swiss guide, and with only a trail-hand as a witness, Kinney's attempt would have been difficult for Wheeler to accept as a *bonafide* first ascent.[67] Legitimate concerns arose over inconsistencies found in Kinney's 1909 account. The first was a gross exaggeration: "During the twenty days we were at Camp Robson we captured five virgin peaks, including Mt. Robson, and made twenty-three big climbs."[68] In that account, Kinney very clearly sets out the activities of each day, and, by his very admission, the entire twenty-one days were either spent at base camp, on the mountain, or on short outings for food. Only four forays made up Mt. Robson could be considered "big climbs," but what of the remaining nineteen? With the exception of (possibly) Mt. Robson, what four "virgin" peaks were captured? During the winter of 1911-1912, Wheeler exchanged five letters with other prominent members of the club regarding what he called the "Kinney affair." Only through speculation can we guess the nature of the correspondence; however, in the months to follow, it grew quite clear that the club's executive still had plans to make Mt. Robson their own.[69]

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[63] These unwritten criteria may have stemmed from the international publicity surrounding the high-profile first ascent of Mount McKinley (Denali), which was discovered to be a hoax in 1910. See Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 59-74.

[64] WMCR, M234. Wheeler to Kinney, 23 September 1909.

[65] Wheeler, "The Alpine Club of Canada's Expedition to Jasper Park": 54.

During the summer of 1913, in addition to its ordinary camp, the ACC hosted a special camp based at Robson Station and Berg Lake, attracting the cream of the mountaineering world. Dignitaries such as Charles Fay and A.P. Coleman, for instance, as well as Arnold Mumm, with his personal guide Moritz Inderbinen, were in attendance. Wheeler carefully chose his summit team to consist of William Foster, deputy minister of

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[66] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 12.

[67] Robinson, "The Golden Years": 9.

[68] Kinney and Phillips, "To the Top of Robson": 42.

Public Works for the Province of British Columbia, and Albert MacCarthy, a banker and naval captain from Summit, New Jersey. To accompany the two men was the ACC guide, Conrad Kain, who had previewed their chosen route up Mt. Robson's eastern slopes two years before from the summit of Mt. Resplendent. Their climb easily became one of the most legendary ascents in Canadian mountaineering history. On July 31, after hours of strenuous climbing, Kain, with the last short stretch before them, turned to his clients and, in keeping with the code of amateur sportsmanship, graciously said, "gentlemen, that's as far as I can take you." With a few more steps, the three were standing on the summit of Mt. Robson.[70] It hardly needs saying that they were later met with great cheer from the awaiting ACC camp on the shores of Berg Lake. At long last, Wheeler and the ACC had their coveted ascent.

It was then, however, that Phillips revealed his astonishing secret. During the evening after the successful climb, Foster retold the epic story of Kinney's great ascent while relaxing around an evening fire. After telling the tale, Phillips, who had been eagerly listening, privately approached Foster and purportedly said, "we didn't get up that last dome."[71] Kain, as well, recalled,

> from what Donald Phillips himself said, our ascent was really the first ascent of Mt. Robson. Phillips' words are as follows: 'We reached on our ascent (in mist and storm), an ice-dome fifty or sixty feet high, which we took for the peak. The danger was too great to ascend the dome.'[72]

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[69] Chic Scott, "Robson Revisited: Revisiting the controversy over the first ascent of the Monarch of the Rockies," *Mountain Heritage Magazine* 1, 2 (Summer 1998): 15.

[70] Conrad Kain, *Where The Clouds Can Go: The Autobiography of Conrad Kain*, ed. and trans. J. Monroe Thorington (1935; New York: The American Alpine Club, 1979), 317. Kain's "autobiography" was compiled by J. Monroe Thorington from broken diaries, written in both German and English, and from scraps of paper written in more than a dozen countries.

[71] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 78.

Kinney, seemingly, had broken his code as a mountaineer, and for him the penalty was severe. The discrediting of the ascent was carried out discreetly; no violent outbursts were recorded, although it is difficult to imagine Kinney accepting his verdict quietly.[73] On the part of the ACC, the quiet rejection carefully avoided public scandal in order to maintain the reputation and respectability of the club and Canadian climbing, especially considering a member of the clergy was involved. The crown was transferred to Kain, MacCarthy, and Foster, while Kinney suddenly became the most "magnificent failure" in Canadian mountaineering history.[74] Contrary to Kinney's fate, that of his companion, Phillips, was only positive; he enjoyed lasting benefits from his role in the disputed ascent. The lack of blame can be attributed, arguably, to the fact that Phillips was merely the helper, and not even a mountaineer.

In the end, certain questions remain unanswered. Did George Kinney climb to the top of Mt. Robson in 1909 or not? Did Phillips withhold the truth for four years, or did he lie in 1913 when he said, "we didn't get up the last dome?" Since that day, Kinney's achievement has been continually downgraded by guidebook writers and historians. Howard Palmer and J. Monroe Thorington, in *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (1921), included the Kinney/Phillips Route, yet stated that the summit dome was not ascended.[75] Later editions of the popular guidebook simply relegated the route to

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[72] Kain, *Where the Clouds Can Go*, 320. It is important to note that a portion of the Canadian chapters in *Where the Clouds Can Go*, particularly the valuable accounts of the summer of 1913, when Mt. Robson was climbed by Kain, was transcribed by Wheeler. Thorington makes brief mention of this in the introduction. See Kain, *Where the Clouds May Go*, xxv.

[73] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 12.

[74] Coleman, "Magnificent Failure": 3.

a historical preamble. The current guidebook, Sean Dougherty's *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (1991), contains no mention of Kinney and Phillip's accomplishment at all.[76]

The early historians, too, have done no better. In his recent book, *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering* (2000), mountaineering historian Chic Scott made clear that the basis on which Kinney's claim was falsified has been largely based on second-hand accounts and downright mistruths.[77] Paddy Sherman, for example, in *Cloud Walkers* (1965), wrote, "it was almost fifty years later that Mr. Kinney finally conceded he was probably mistaken, and that he had been a few feet short of the summit."[78] Unfortunately, Sherman offered no evidence to support his claim and, when questioned on the matter by Scott, admitted that he could not recall what had led him to that conclusion.[79] Sherman's words, Scott argued, likely influenced Esther Fraser, who, in *The Canadian Rockies: Early Travels and Explorations* (1969), speculated, "perhaps the great clergyman-climber was a much happier man when he finally conceded nearly fifty years later that he had been probably 'mistaken' and that he had been a few feet short of the summit."[80] Taylor, as well, in *Tracks Across my Trail* (1984), reiterated Sherman's earlier assertion: "In the mid-1950s, as an old man, he is reported to have

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[75] Howard Palmer and J. Monroe Thorington, *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (New York: The American Alpine Club, 1921).

[76] Dougherty, *Selected Alpine Climbs*, 299-310.

[77] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 79-82.

[78] Sherman, *Cloudwalkers*, 104.

[79] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 80.

[80] Esther Fraser, *The Canadian Rockies: Early Travels and Exploration* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1969), 202.

conceded his mistake in believing that he had reached the summit."[81] Sadly, both Fraser and Taylor failed to cite any evidence to support their claims.

In complete contradiction, however, Kinney's own son, Don, maintained, "all his life he [George Kinney] was completely convinced that he had reached the top. There was no doubt in his mind at all."[82] Even Conrad Kain was sympathetic to Kinney's purported ascent. On his map of Mt. Robson, now preserved in Banff at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, for instance, Kain sketched his 1913 ascent route and wrote: "Showing the route taken on the *second ascent* [emphasis mine] of Mt. Robson, July 31, 1913."[83] Kain's biographer, J. Monroe Thorington, as well, noted that, "MacCarthy and Kain have always given credit for the first ascent to Kinney and Phillips…."[84] In addition, Ken Jones, an old-time guide and a friend of Kain's as a young man, recently recalled talking with Kain on the subject: "I asked him, I said, 'What is this controversy over Phillips and Kinney not getting to the top?' He said, 'That was Wheeler. That was Mr. Wheeler's work…. Kinney and Phillips were on the top. They were on the top.'"[85]

The most interesting piece of the puzzle was recently uncovered by Scott and publisher Gillean Daffern: the minister's Dominion flag and summit note were actually found by a Harvard Mountaineering Club party in 1959.[86] The summit articles, which were stuffed in a coffee can, were discovered high in Mt. Robson's massive northwest bowl, only 300 metres shy of the summit ridge (see Fig. 9). But 300 metres is significantly lower than what Kinney originally alleged: "…we cached them on our return," Kinney said, "in a splendid rock cairn, a few hundred feet below the peak."[87] Considering this discrepancy, Canadian alpinist Barry Blanchard offered his first-hand knowledge of the terrain in Kinney's defence:

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[81] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 13.

[82] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 80.

[83] Ibid., 81.

[84] J. Monroe Thorington, "A Mountaineering Journey Through Jasper Park," *CAJ* 16 (1926-1927): 105.

[85] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 81.

> Perhaps Kinney did gaze down through the hole that his ice axe made, and saw a "sheer wall of precipice" (the Emperor Face) falling to the Mist and Berg glaciers and Berg Lake, thousands and thousands of feet below. And "splendid natural cairns" (where Kinney claimed to have left his coffee can) do exist in the rock one or two hundred feet off the ridge line; given that the gargoyles collapse over time and that the bowl itself avalanches hugely, sliding snow could have carried the can further downslope—ah, the joys of speculation.[88]

Despite any lingering speculation from armchair enthusiasts, it is now widely accepted—by Blanchard and Scott, among other authorities—that Kinney and Phillips *did* reach a point somewhere high on the summit ridge of Mt. Robson. "We sorted it out," Scott commented in 2005:

> He [Kinney] reached the Emperor Ridge at the west end of the gargoyles, a magnificent achievement. He looked down and saw Berg Lake. In the mist they could not see the ridge extending along to the summit. They likely did not climb to the top of a large cornice, which is what Phillips was talking about.[89]

At this late date, we will likely never uncover the truth concerning Wheeler's suspected hand in the ACC's quiet dismissal of Kinney's claim; both Wheeler's and Kinney's

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[86] Ibid., 81-2.

[87] Kinney and Phillips, "To the Top of Robson": 40.

[88] Barry Blanchard, "The King and I," *CAJ* 86 (2003): 32.

[89] Chic Scott, personal communication, Mar. 1, 2005.

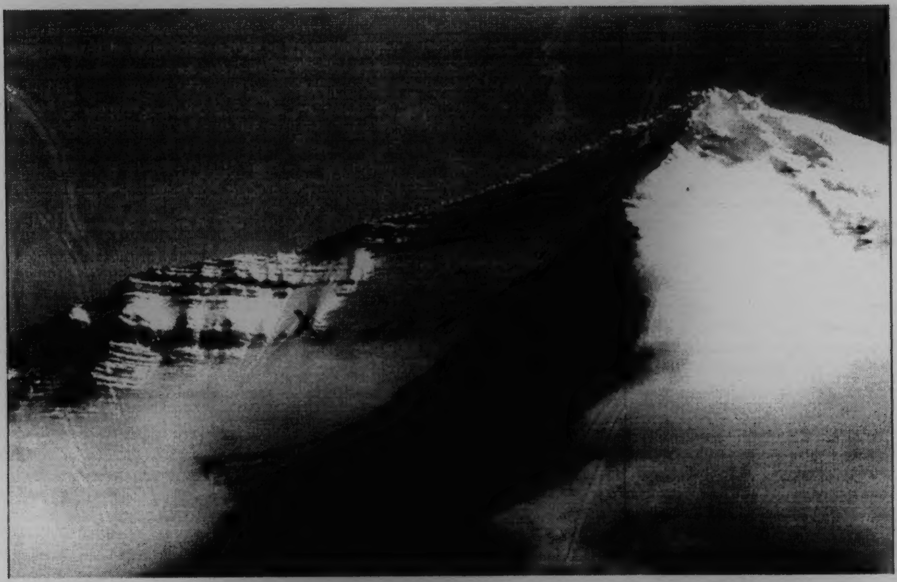

Fig. 9 Author. The bowl on the northwest face of Mount Robson. Kinney and Phillips traversed in from the lower left, and then climbed the left side of the bowl to gain the left-hand ridge. Note the saw-tooth "gargoyles" on the upper Emperor Ridge. The "X" marks the approximate spot where the summit register and Dominion flag were found in 1959. Photograph, August 2002.

personal papers, unfortunately, are no longer extant. Even Phillips, who was a faithful diarist for many years, mysteriously failed to keep a written record during the Mt. Robson episode.[90] Contextualized within larger social-historical trends, however, the drama of Mt. Robson's disputed first ascent reveals deeper complexities; that is, it was far more than the driven antics of a clergyman, surveyor, trail hand, and/or guide. The conquest of Mt. Robson symbolized the taming of the imagined Western Canadian frontier—a trophy for expansionist progress and a reassertion of Anglo-Protestant manhood. Within a British-imperial discourse and under the banner of the newly-formed ACC, Canadian nationalists "stormed the heights," so-to-speak, thereby forcefully asserting their presence within the Canadian ranges.

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[90] Taylor, *Tracks Across my Trail*, 12.

Where The Clouds Can Go?

Although the period of imperial expansion concluded with the First World War, the idea of the frontier still carried powerful resonance and meaning for many Victorians, and continued to symbolize a remedy for a complex series of social problems facing the empire. At the end of the nineteenth century, Britain found itself precariously positioned in a state of increased social anxiety, produced both by an emerging period of rapid decolonization and by a rising fear of imminent war in Europe. Civilization, it seemed, had grown stagnant, soft, even pampered. "The proofs were everywhere," wrote MacDonald, "the middle classes were worldly and selfish, the working classes degenerate, society had become immoral, modern literature and art quite decadent, everyday life selfish and materialistic."[91] Alarmed by a sense of an imminent conflict growing in Europe, middle-class Victorians became principally concerned with the young British men, those who lacked the virtues associated with popular ideas of manhood, such as strength, self-reliance, health, honesty, and good citizenship. With society seemingly unable to produce men who were both physically and morally strong, a new ethic built on a discourse of manly patriotism appeared necessary. The belief that "brave men build empires" amounted tacitly to a fact; thus, a model of manhood was found in the imagined idea of the imperial frontier.

In this context, consider Donald "Curly" Phillips. For Phillips, like many young men who came of age at the turn of the century, the frontier was a testing ground for manhood, offering young men a chance to prove their masculinity to their peers. His appearance was stereotypical, embodying the outward symbols of the frontiersman, such as the cowboy hat, the flannel shirt, and neckerchief (see Fig. 10). Such symbols illustrated the differences between freedom and restraint, when contrasted to the popular photograph of the bespectacled Rev. George Kinney, who is portrayed in classic Edwardian imagery: shirt and starched white collar buttoned to the neck, stifled under formal wear (see Fig. 11).[92] Consider, for example, Kinney's first impression of Phillips:

> The next day Donald Phillips rode into camp. On the side of his Stetson hat was the silver badge that bore the legend of The Guide Association of Ontario. At twenty-five years of age, that blue-eyed, curly headed clean-lived Canadian entered that little frontier scene, perfectly fit for the undertaking I had in hand.[93]

What made Phillips "perfectly fit" to accompany Kinney on the Mt. Robson adventure was his apparent manly attributes. Phillips embodied the popular frontiersman image, and it, in turn, likely attracted the young man not only to the West, but also to the profession of trail guiding itself. He was represented as youthful, strong, adventurous, fearless, even-tempered, and, most important, *honest*. After Phillips's death in 1938, the president of the American Alpine Club cast Curly "as a man of quiet reserve always ready to laugh, as one who would move like a shadow through the woods, and carved his own brand of woodsmanship out of old Indian ways…a person who relied on himself."[94] Indeed, the self-reliant Phillips passed the "test of manhood" and came out of the Mt. Robson debacle unscathed to enjoy a long illustrious career in the employment of the ACC. Phillips's word escaped question, arguably, because "real men" never lie.

The archetypal frontiersman of this sordid tale was not Phillips, however, but the Austrian-immigrant guide, Conrad Kain, who was perhaps the most legendary guide in

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[91] MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire*, 4.

[92] Ibid., 5-6; Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 72.

[93] WMCR, M241, George Kinney, 1909.

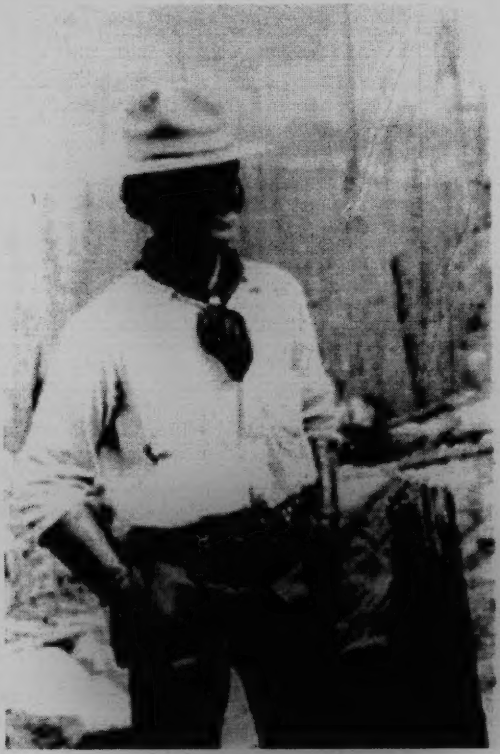

Fig. 10 Blanche Hume. Donald "Curly" Phillips (1884-1938). Photograph, 1913. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V14/AC 027 18(15).

Canadian mountaineering history. Hailed as the "Prince of Canadian Alpine Guides," Kain was represented as the quintessential European guide—among those whom initiated and spurred on the so-called golden age of mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies.[95] Similar to Phillips, Kain was young, strong, and of the working class. After Kain's death in 1934, Jimmy Simpson, a trail companion, wrote, "Conrad gave every ounce of his best at all times. He would die for you, if need be, quicker than most men think of living. No matter what his creed, his color or his nationality, he was measured by a man's yardstick,

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[94] Ed Struzik, "Reaching the Top," *Edmonton Journal* (3 November 2002): D4.

[95] Fraser, *The Canadian Rockies*, 201; Zac Robinson, "Conrad Kain, 1883-1934," *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada* XVII (University of Toronto/Univerité Laval, 2007), forthcoming.

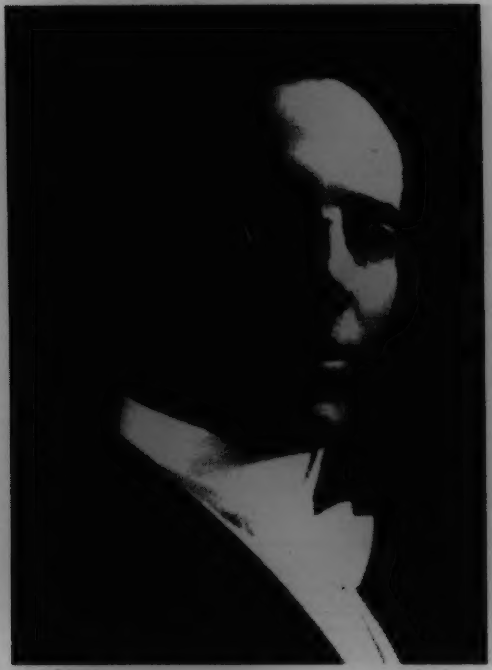

Fig. 11 Unknown. George Rex Boyer Kinney (1872-1961). Photograph. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum and Archives, HP 77114.

no other."[96] Such manly and self-sacrificing virtues, arguably, won Wheeler's paternal approval, authorizing Kain access to the professional cliental of the ACC, as well as an opportunity to climb Canada's most coveted peak at the time. To accompany Kain, Wheeler chose his close friends Foster and MacCarthy.[97]

Kinney, unlike Kain, Foster, and MacCarthy, did not have Wheeler's authorization to attempt Mt. Robson. Under the leadership of Arthur P. Coleman, the experienced explorer and geographic scholar, Kinney's role was to be an assistant, a team member, a mere trail-hand. Kinney's obsessive, unmanly virtues, however, broke this fellowship—a tabooed gesture—symbolically rupturing the imagined "brotherhood of the rope." Although extraordinarily progressive, Kinney's 1909 ascent, in fact, broke from all standard codes. What sealed his fate were the gross exaggerations found in his 1909 account published in the 1910 *CAJ*, particularly the erroneous claim to have "captured five virgin peaks… and made twenty-three big climbs."[98] Such dishonesty largely contributed to the damnation of Kinney, who ultimately failed the moral test of manhood. Within this discourse, it was quite impossible for Kinney to claim the summit of Mt. Robson, the symbolically charged act that carried political, nationalistic, and even spiritual resonance. Perhaps Andreas Maurer best summed it up, when, in the early pages of Kain's autobiography, he declared, "where the clouds can go men can go; but they must be hardy men."[99] Anyone else, it seems, simply would not do.

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[96] Phil Dowling, *The Mountaineers: Famous Climbers in Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1979), 101.

[97] Twelve years later, Foster and MacCarthy would climb again together, on behalf of the ACC, in an attempt to secure the first ascent of Mount Logan, the highest peak in Canada. See "The Mount Logan Expedition," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 1-126; Zac Robinson and PearlAnn Reichwein, "Canada's Everest? Rethinking the First Ascent of Mount Logan and the Politics of Nationhood, 1925," *Sport History Review* 35, 2 (Nov. 2004): 95-121.

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[98] Kinney and Phillips, "To the Top of Robson": 42.

[99] Kain, *Where the Clouds Can* Go, unpaginated.

CHAPTER THREE

Canada's Everest? The Politics of Nationhood and the First Ascent of Mount Logan, 1925

In the early decades of the twentieth century, mountaineering in Canada progressed largely independently of the European mainstream. During this era, however, one British endeavour captured the imagination of North American climbers and, for the first time, propelled mountaineering into western popular culture: the struggle to climb the highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, which began in the early 1920s. Claiming the first ascent of Mt. Everest was of paramount importance to Britain, and a preoccupation that lasted nearly half a century. In 1924, the British made a third attempt, via the mountain's north ridge, with all hopes resting on George Leigh Mallory—the so-called "Gallahad" of the British mountaineering fraternity—and his young, inexperienced climbing partner, Andrew "Sandy" Irvine. Clad in tweed suits and puttees, the two men left for the summit on the morning of June 8, but never returned. News of Mallory's and Irvine's deaths deeply moved many people in the West and inevitably produced intense discussion concerning whether the sacrifice in climbing the world's highest mountain was worth it. An editorial in the *Morning Post* provided an answer later that month:

> In the days of peace England will always hold some who are not content with humdrum routine and soft living. The spirit which animated the attacks on Everest is the same as that which has prompted arctic and other expeditions, and in earlier times led to the formation of the Empire itself. Who shall say that any of its manifestations are not worth while? Who shall say that its inspiration has not a far-reaching influence on the race? It is certain that it would grow rusty

> with disuse, and expeditions like the attempt to scale Everest serve to whet the sword of ambition and courage.[1]

The "spirit" of the early Mt. Everest expeditions prompted North American climbers to action in 1925. Under the organizational auspices of The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), climbers representing the national alpine clubs of Canada, the United States, and Britain rallied together for the "conquest" of Mount Logan, the highest unclimbed mountain on the North American continent. According to long-time ACC director Arthur O. Wheeler, they went boldly forth, "following the example of The Alpine Club (England) in its endeavour to climb the highest mountain in the world."[2]

Looking closely at this celebrated ascent, how it was represented by the expedition members and the popular press throughout Canada and abroad, this chapter suggests that, behind the romantic ideals of exploration and adventure, there lurked a somewhat less innocent side to climbing and, in the case of early twentieth-century mountaineering, a larger political complexity associated with the international power relations of the era.[3] The theoretical thrust stems largely from the orientation of Rueben Ellis' *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of Neoimperialism* (2001). In that book, Ellis explored the various conventions of the modern mountaineering narrative to suggest that they "can be read as expressing the ideology of European and U.S. expansionism in the modern period, a phenomenon often referred to as the new imperialism."[4] In its representation, the conquest of Mt. Logan served to heighten the awareness of national identities—both conceptually and technologically—as a sort of "summit nationalism," a conspicuous act of claiming whereby nationalist identities were forged and propagated on the unclimbed summits of the world.[5] While an analysis of the ascent demonstrates the positioning of mountaineering as both an extension of imperial conquest and an assertion of Canadian nationhood, it simultaneously places on view the shifting balance of Canada's interwar external relations away from Britain and towards an emerging neo-imperialist America.

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[1] *Morning Post*, 24 June 1924. Qtd. in Unsworth, *Everest*, 141.

[2] Wheeler, "A Few More Words": 9.

[3] My intention is not to diminish the effort expended by the 1925 team, but, rather, to provide an examination of the varied meanings "climbing mountains" took on in the early twentieth-century Western imagination.

Mountaineering as Exploration

Originally associated with the spiritual and aesthetic quests of late-eighteenth-century Romantic poets, mountaineering narratives, by the mid-nineteenth century, began to change as climbing mountains became both the leisure sport of gentleman and a means of pursuing scientific investigation.[6] The language used to narrate mountaineering pursuits became exceedingly understated as Victorian mountaineers downplayed the character of adventure, risk, and exploit, when describing events that, according to Ellis, "we all *know* are more exciting and frightening than the writer lets on."[7] Gone were the

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[4] Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 41.

[5] For various discussions concerning summit nationalism, see Hansen, "Vertical Boundaries, National Identities": 48-71; Harald Höbusch, "Germany's 'Mountain of Destiny': *Nanga Parbat* and National Self-representation," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, 4 (Dec. 2002): 137-168; Stephen Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest": 15-35; and Robinson and Reichwein, "Canada's Everest?": 95-121.

[6] Schama, *Landscape and Memoy*, 411-502; Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class": 588-89.

[7] Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 4.

"revelations of the inner self" that had been characteristic of mountain writing and poetry, as the genre of mountaineering prose became formal and restrained.[8]

By the end of the century, however, writing about mountaineering took another direction. Victorian climbers had slowly ventured beyond the borders of the European Alps into Asia, Africa, and North America in search of impressive first ascents. With this expansion, mountaineering gradually became bound with the motivations of "exploration," a geophysical and political project intent on conquering what early British Everest explorer John Noel called, "nature's last secret stronghold."[9] Typically, exploration had been associated with coastlines, rivers, deserts, and the Arctic, but, by the late-nineteenth century, the once conceptually limitless terra incognita had shrunk to what Clements Markham, president of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), referred to as mere "blank spaces on the map."[10] Many of those blanks, for obvious reasons, were mountainous regions. From the 1850s onward, casual mention of mountaineering as a form of exploration began to appear in accounts written for The Alpine Club (England) and the RGS, but, as Ellis noted, "only with the extensive expansion of climbing out of the European Alps later in the century did the term *exploration*, as applied to mountaineering, take on the same meaning that it has when applied to other types of exploration."[11] As mountaineering was positioned in the larger canon of late nineteenth-century exploration, climbing narratives came to occupy a firm place in the journals, magazines, and publishing houses that popularized accomplishments more traditionally thought of as exploration. This repositioning had major implications for the way that climbing was represented and read in popular culture.

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[8] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 95.

[9] John Baptist Noel, *Through Tibet to Everest* (London: Edward Arnold, 1927), 27.

[10] Clements R. Markham, "Address to the Royal Geographic Society," *Geographical Journal* 8 (1896): 481-505.

[11] Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 12.

During the nineteenth century, the seemingly untamed places of the world were enthusiastically charted by British explorers/mapmakers through various prodigious acts of imperial technology, often in the form of a geographic survey. "It was a century of discovery," wrote mountaineering historian Walt Unsworth, "the century of Livingston and Burton, Stanley and Mungo Park."[12] It was also a century of *naming*. Once infiltrated and accounted for, the world's remaining blanks on the map were systematically stamped with the small, cursive surnames of those who discovered them. Some mountains, particularly those closer to the civilized world, had been named long before; during the nineteenth century, however, "micro-naming" began in earnest. Distant peaks, passes, and glaciers all started to take the names of those explorers and mountaineers who sought them out.[13] A form of commemoration, this type of naming was also, quite clearly, one of colonization: what writer Robert Macfarlane called "a thwarted expression of the Victorian drive to bring the Empire home."[14] Of course, to properly prove they had been there, climbers left their own names behind on the summit, often scratched on tiny parchments secured within hastily-constructed rock cairns.

Place naming had another important function that shaped how exploration-cum-mountaineering was narrated. "Naming," argued Macfarlane, "was and remains a way to place space within a wider matrix of significance: a way, essentially, to make the unknown known."[15] Fundamentally, place naming was a mechanism that allowed early travellers to make sense of foreign landscapes, those which, given their radical difference from the familiar, might otherwise be unknowable. The marking of places and features structured the previously anonymous lands, making them landscapes by affixing to them a recognizable presence or event within a given time and space; consequently, it allowed stories to be told that advanced the colonial project, tamed the imaginary wilds, and naturalized the explorer. By the late-nineteenth century, the same colonialist rhetoric transformed the ascent of alpine peaks and passes into representations of British conquests.[16] Thus, the uncharted landscape became an utterly known landscape to the Western intelligentsia, one to be penetrated, mapped, and conquered.

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[12] Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 141.

[13] Newly formed in 1857, The Alpine Club (England) published several volumes of a journal entitled *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, followed in 1863 and thereafter by its quarterly publication called *The Alpine Journal*.

[14] Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of Fascination* (London: Granta Books, 2003), 189.

In addition to adopting the language of exploration, mountaineering borrowed heavily from the methods developed for Arctic exploration. Demanding meticulous planning and military precision, the "Peary System," coined by the ostentatious American polar explorer Robert Peary, required a preliminary party to establish advance caches and supplies, so the polar party, well rested and refreshed, could make a light dash for the final objective. In 1909, this system of trail breaking and support parties carried Peary farther north than any previous explorer. His methods, although slightly modified to deal with the effects of altitude, were later adopted by the British on Mt. Everest, which, after the North and South Pole were reached, became "the most coveted object in the realm of terrestrial exploration."[17]

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[15] Ibid., 191.

[16] Hansen, "Albert Smith": 304.

[17] Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster* (New York: Villard Books, 1997), 17.

Writing in the 1911 *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*), climbers Herschel Parker and Belmore Brown hinted at the growing significance of mountaineering as they shifted the standard of success away from polar exploration. They looked to the highest mountain in North America, Alaska's Mt. McKinley, only 238 metres higher than Mt. Logan, insisting that the mountain "presents a geographical and mountaineering problem second only in difficulty if not in importance to the attainment of the summit of Mount Everest or the conquest of the South Pole."[18] Despite Mt. McKinley's challenge and grandeur, it could be described only as a "second" Mt. Everest or South Pole in the period under consideration; that is, Mt. Everest was clearly the standard as long as it remained unclimbed. Nevertheless, Mt. Everest, too, although confined within the perceived terra incognita of south-central Asia, was an utterly charted landscape to the British-colonial offices of Asia. "The idea of a British climber triumphantly on Everest," noted literary scholar Stephen Slemon, "sutured mountaineering to the principle of imperial paramountcy, and 'Everest' became the inevitable site for an allegory of colonial continuance."[19] With high-altitude mountaineering still in its infancy, the well-publicized British expeditions to Mt. Everest, in 1921, 1922, and 1924, became the benchmark by which all other mountaineering initiatives would inevitably be compared. Mountaineering, it seemed, had become a thoroughly modern form of exploration.

The Conquest of Mount Logan

Situated in the extreme southwest corner of Canada's Yukon Territory, only thirty kilometres from the Alaskan border, Mt. Logan is one of the largest mountain massifs in the world, measuring almost fifty kilometres from one end to the other, and rising to a height of 5,959 metres. Its base is more than 100 kilometers in circumference, and supports an upper plateau twenty kilometers long, most of it above 5,000 metres, upon which stands a complex mass of sub peaks. Israel C. Russell, with the United States Geological Survey, made the first recorded sighting of Mt. Logan in 1890. While attempting the first ascent of Mount St. Elias, a mountain then believed to be the highest in North America, Russell, although ultimately unsuccessful in his bid, spotted Mt. Logan forty-two kilometres away:

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[18] Herschel C. Parker and Belmore Brown, "Expedition to Mount McKinley," *CAJ* 3 (1911): 57.

[19] Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest": 17.

> The clouds parting toward the northeast revealed several giant peaks not before seen, some of which seem to rival in height St. Elias itself. One stranger, rising in three white domes far above the clouds, was especially magnificent. As this was probably the first time its summit was ever seen, we took the liberty of giving it a name. It will appear on our maps as *Mount Logan*, in honour of Sir William E. Logan, founder and long director of the Geological Survey of Canada.[20]

Seven years later, Mt. St. Elias was successfully climbed by an Italian expedition led by Prince Luigi Amedeo di Savoy, Duke of Abruzzi. Among the Duke's vast retinue of guides and porters was Vittorio Sella, the famed mountain photographer charged to record the expedition. Sella photographed Mt. Logan from Mt. St. Elias's summit and his photograph later became part of the 1913 International Boundary Survey, during which Mt. Logan was measured as the highest mountain in both the St. Elias Range and in Canada. With the successful ascent of Mt. McKinley by an American party in the late spring of 1913, Mt. Logan became the highest unclimbed mountain in North America.

In the same year, the ACC claimed the first ascent of Mount Robson, located in the Jasper-Yellowhead region of the Rocky Mountains and then thought to be the highest mountain in Canada outside the Yukon Territories. The ascent had been a priority for the

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[20] Israel C. Russell, "An Expedition to Mount St. Elias, Alaska," *The National Geographic Magazine* 3 (1891): 141.

ACC since the club's inception in March 1906, and was commonly viewed by the club's executive as a feat that would strongly assert a Canadian presence within the Canadian ranges. Up until 1906, English and American mountaineers had, by and large, led the way in Canada, causing the early protagonists of club to lament national apathy and indifference towards the sport. In fact, it was this sense of "lateness" that led to the formation of the Canadian club itself: "We had awakened out of sleep," wrote ACC co-founder Elizabeth Parker, in the inaugural issue of the *CAJ*, "and would redeem the past by a vigorous mountaineering organization."[21] With the summit of Mt. Robson attained, Wheeler, the club's director, enthusiastically looked to the future: "And now for Canada's highest," he wrote, "Mt. Logan!"[22] Suddenly, however, Canada was at war. As a result, many activities of the ACC, similar to those of many other voluntary organizations, abruptly halted. It was nine years before the idea of climbing Mt. Logan resurfaced.

Prior to the First World War, British loyalties were particularly strong among the Victorian sporting traditions in Canada, as newly-formed, nationally-affiliated amateur organizations, such as the ACC, often exhibited a strain of nationalism closely associated with imperialism.[23] Canada's status on the world stage, however, dramatically changed as a result of the Great War. Participation had earned the youthful country recognition as an autonomous nation, with its own signature on the peace treaty and a seat in the new

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[21] Parker, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 3.

[22] Foster, "The Story of the Expedition": 47; MacCarthy, "Preliminary Explorations": 27.

[23] Prizes for the best-known sporting events of the period, for example, were all donated by vice-regal dignitaries from Britain: the Stanley Cup for men's ice hockey, the Grey Cup for men's rugby football, the Connaught Cup for men's soccer, the Minto Cup for men's lacrosse, and the Lady Dufferin Cup for women's figure skating. See Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 38. For a discussion of imperial nationalism in early twentieth-century Canada, see Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 259-65.

League of Nations. National life in Canada was revitalized through the articulation of new values and attitudes that emphasized an almost zealous brand of nationalism that largely came to characterize the 1920s in memory.

Although close at hand, full-grown nationhood was not yet fully realized in post-war Canada. The conundrum facing the nationalist movement was the lack of a culture that could reflect the new national status and demonstrate, to Canadians and the world, the country's coming of age. Home-grown cultural producers were quick to react. In the arts and letters, painters and writers embraced the challenge of culturally "narrating the nation" in ways that emphasized the inevitability and goodness of Canada. Arthur Lismer, a member of the Group of Seven, recalled that "after 1919, most creative people began to have a guilty feeling that Canada was as yet unwritten, unpainted, unsung.... In 1920 [the year of the group's first exhibition], there was a job to be done."[24] While intellectuals debated the merits of the Toronto-based artists in new periodicals, such as *Canadian Forum*, *MacLean's Magazine*, and *Canadian Magazine*, John Defoe, the publisher of the *Manitoba Free Press*, challenged the Canadian Authors Association: "National Consciousness doesn't happen," he told them in 1923, "it must be encouraged. It is a product of vision, imagination, and courage."[25]

Canadian identity was promoted no less through the sports of the era. For example, among the first voluntary organizations to establish a national public presence in Canada, outside of the churches, was the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada. Amateur sport officials, according to sport historian Bruce Kidd, "were convinced that sports could play an even more beneficial role in peacetime, not only to facilitate the soldiers' return to civilian life but to lead Canada to a magnificent destiny."[26] In the years that followed, the representational status of sports exploded through coverage in the press, news reels, and over the new medium of radio, all intensifying national identifications in Canada and abroad. Sporting honour, it seemed, was no longer gained so much through the earlier goals of rational recreation, "the civilizing pedagogy of sport participation and sport for all," as through the winning of international accolades in the interest of Canadian greatness.[27] Canadians could boast of the sailing feats of the *Bluenose* or feel equally enthused by the charmingly naïve, young men and women who proudly wore the maple leaf in the growing international competitions of the 1920s, such as the Olympics and the British Empire Games.[28] Flush with the spirit of nation-building, the ACC's proposed ascent of Mt. Logan took place squarely in this period of heightened enthusiasm.

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[24] Thompson and Seager, *Canada*, 158. For an excellent discussion of the Group of Seven and the ideas of nation that were advanced in and around their work, see Jessup, "The Group of Seven and the Tourist Landscape": 144-79.

[25] Mary Vipond, "National Consciousness in English Speaking Canada in the 1920s: Seven Studies," (PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 1974): 218-23, 542. Among the arts and letters, the efforts to create a cultural tradition were surprisingly successful during the interwar period; in fact, when measured in terms of quantity, the outpouring of Canadian art, poetry, and prose is quite astonishing. See Thompson and Seager, *Canada*, 158-69; Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 52-3.

The decision to attempt Canada's highest peak was made in November 1923, at the first meeting of the Mount Logan Executive Committee in Vancouver. The proceedings came at the request of Toronto geology professor and explorer Arthur P. Coleman, who, during his term as president of the ACC, took the occasion of the annual camp, held earlier that year in the Larch Valley south of Lake Louise, to form a directing committee that consisted of the club's upper brass. Never before had a North American mountaineering expedition required a committee structure. In another first for the ACC, an additional advisory committee was also established, which included Belmore Brown of Mt. McKinley fame and Edward O. Wheeler, the son of Arthur Wheeler, who was a surveyor on the 1921 British reconnaissance of Mt. Everest and later the Surveyor General of India.[29]

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[26] Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 45.

[27] Ibid., 63-4.

[28] For an good portrayal of Canadian sport during the interwar period, see Ron Lappage, "Sport Between the Wars," *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*, ed. Don Morrow, Mary Keyes, Frank Cosentino, and Ron Lappage (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 88-108; and Colin D. Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 128-34.

The Mount Logan Executive Committee invested three years in meticulous planning and reconnaissance in order to undertake the largest siege expedition in Canadian mountaineering history; the personnel, language, and logistics of the expedition all bore a sort of military-style fastidiousness characteristic of early twentieth-century exploration. From 1923 onward, preparations for the "assault" attracted newspaper coverage, which, in almost all cases, emphasized the national significance of the ascent:

> The enterprise of making the ascent of the highest mountain in Canada through the medium of her Alpine Club is one that largely concerns Canadians. It will be an accomplishment of which all may well be proud, and it is hoped that loyal support and financial assistance will not be lacking to carry the undertaking to a successful issue.[30]

By December 1923, however, the expedition was lacking the necessary funds; while more than $2,000 had been raised through private donations, it was not nearly enough. Aware that other climbers viewed the challenge of Mt. Logan with increasing interest, Arthur Wheeler appealed to Canadian patriotism: "I shall be issuing a subscription list immediately after the new year," he assured fellow committee members, "and then hope that Canadian patriotism will come to our aid, for if we do not do this thing ourselves, there is no question but that the Americans will do it."[31] The committee members followed suit, advertising Mt. Logan as "our Canadian Everest" and "a prize our neighbours across the line will capture unless we can get sufficient support to make it a Canadian achievement."[32] Nevertheless, the expedition financially failed to get off the ground in 1924, and another year of fundraising and preparation ensued.

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[29] WMCR, M200 AC 0 61, Wheeler to Lambart, 15 Nov. 1923.

[30] WMCR, M200 AC 0 61, "To Climb Canada's Highest Mountain: Alpine Club is Planning Mount Logan Expedition," *Gazette*, 27 November 1923.

Undoubtedly, the delay heightened the already hurried sense of lateness regarding Mt. Logan's first ascent. During this time, many of the world's great unclimbed summits, particularly those located on strategic borderlands, represented the last remaining sites for western explorers to discover and traffic.[33] Even Mt. Everest itself, for instance, became known as "the Third Pole."[34] The committee's justification for attempting Mt. Logan was voiced in the same anxious tone:

> This year Logan is unclimbed. Next year—who can say? Man will have fought another battle with nature, he may have won, he may have lost. The Canadian Alpine Club may be able to boast of the fulfillment of a task that was rightly, proudly, its own, or the great northern summit may have sunk back into the winter obscurity of its arctic snows, secure in its solitudes, until in other years man may come again to intrude into its loneliness seeking for a reward that inspires as it eludes.[35]

In its distinctiveness as the highest unclimbed peak on the continent, Mt. Logan was imagined as one of the last great exploratory challenges; and, thus, like Mt. Everest, it became a powerful imperial and national icon, and was repeatedly elevated to cultural ascendancy. This staging was powerfully evident in the nature of the adventure advocated by the Mount Logan Executive Committee, in a proposal titled "The Proposed Conquest of Mount Logan, the highest unclimbed mountain on the North American Continent":

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[31] WMCR, M200 AC 0 61, Wheeler to Lambart, 20 December 1923.

[32] WMCR, M200 AC 0 61, Lambart to Eve, 21 January 1924.

[33] Ellis, *Vertical Margins*, 22.

[34] Hansen, "Vertical Boundaries, National Identities": 63.

[35] WMCR, M200 AC OM 17A, "The Proposed Conquest of Mount Logan, the highest unclimbed mountain on the North American Continent."

> In the distant Yukon—bulwarked by immense precipices of ice—ringed about by vast glaciers, stands Mt. Logan, towering 19,880 feet above sea level. This is the monarch of all Canadian peaks and it has never been climbed. In that fact lies a challenge and a summons to all intrepid adventurers in whom burns the desire to dare the known and venture where no man has trod.[36]

The person appointed to lead the expedition was Albert MacCarthy, a former captain in the United States Navy and a long-time member of the ACC. Originally a banker who had, by 1924, relocated from New Jersey to Wilmer, British Columbia, MacCarthy held certain acclaim in Canadian mountaineering circles for numerous first ascents, particularly those on Mt. Robson, Bugaboo Spire, and Mt. Louis, all in the company of the famed Austrian guide Conrad Kain. As leader of the Mt. Logan expedition, MacCarthy had to decide what approach to take to the mountain. Not only was the route to the summit unknown, the country surrounding the peak, although partially travelled, was still largely unexplored; moreover, the mountain lay 240 kilometres from the nearest human habitation.[37] The best option was to travel up the Chitina River from the Alaskan town of McCarthy to the Logan Glacier, an approach taken earlier by the International Boundary Survey in 1913, but whether or not it would lead to a feasible route up the mountain remained unknown.

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[36] Ibid.

[37] The approach used to access Mt. St. Elias by the Duke of Abruzzi, from Yakutat Bay on the coast, was unpractical for MacCarthy's team. Notorious for its unpredictable weather, the area then lacked a satisfactory base, and the approach would have brought the climbers to the wrong side of Mt. Logan.

MacCarthy, along with Andy Taylor and Miles Atkinson, two local guides from McCarthy, set out on a reconnaissance during the summer of 1924. They pioneered a route 160 kilometres up the Chitina River to the edge of a great ice cap, and then continued an additional eighty kilometres over the Chitina, Logan, and Ogilvie glaciers to within twenty-nine kilometres of the mountain. With a feasible approach reconnoitered, MacCarthy immediately decided the task of climbing Mt. Logan required another preliminary expedition to haul in crucial supplies. It was obvious that the team's chances of success would be far greater if climbers arrived at the mountain in good physical condition, rather than exhausted from the burden of carrying in the required equipment, supplies, and provisions. Thus, on completion of the initial forty-five-day reconnaissance trip, MacCarthy began preparations at once for a freighting expedition.

Freighting began in February 1925, during the height of an exceptionally cold, dark arctic winter. With a party of five men, including Taylor and Atkinson, six heavy draft horses, and three dog teams, MacCarthy set out with almost 9,000 kilograms of gear and provisions. In temperatures that plummeted below -40°C, the team struggled up the Chitina Valley. "Nature," MacCarthy noted, "seemed to have reversed all customs of the valley and gave us the unexpected throughout the journey."[38] Humbled by the difficult conditions day after day, the team delayed starting work because the early morning air was so cold that deep breaths, caused by the labour of hauling loads, threatened to freeze the lungs of the animals.[39] In fact, shortly after departure, the harnesses on the horses froze solid and could not be removed for almost two weeks. Nevertheless, the team persisted and, by late March, crossed the international boundary into Canada. Continuing up the Logan Glacier, where progress was significantly easier, the convoy turned southeast and travelled up the Ogilvie Glacier towards the base of Mt. Logan, where they cached 2,600 kilograms of supplies needed for the climbing expedition (see Fig. 12).[40] Of the two-month ordeal, which journalist Paddy Sherman noted, "is still without equal as a mountaineering preliminary," MacCarthy wrote,

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[38] MacCarthy, "Preliminary Explorations": 32.

[39] Ibid.: 32.

> we started with over nineteen thousand pounds of cargo, had travelled nine hundred and fifty miles under arctic conditions, and cached eight thousand seven hundred pounds of provisions, feed and equipment where it would be needed by the Expedition. Even though we had exceeded the estimated time by nearly three weeks, the job proved to be twice as hard as anyone had calculated it would be.[41]

Successful, they returned to McCarthy on April 26, but, for MacCarthy and Taylor, there was little rest. Ten days later, they met the remainder of the climbing team, who arrived in Cordova by steamer, and, on May 12, set out once again for Mt. Logan.

The Mount Logan Executive Committee, after a thorough survey that included consultation with both the Alpine Club (England) and the American Alpine Club (AAC), selected the climbers for the expedition. From the outset, the ACC directed the expedition, but the mountaineers were said to represent three national alpine clubs. The international team embraced the opportunity for the first major collaboration between the ACC and the AAC. The deputy-leader was Canadian Fred Lambart, who, as a member of the Geodetic Survey of Canada, had spent seven years working for the International

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[40] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 97.

[41] Sherman, *Cloudwalkers*, 12; MacCarthy, "Preliminary Explorations": 46.

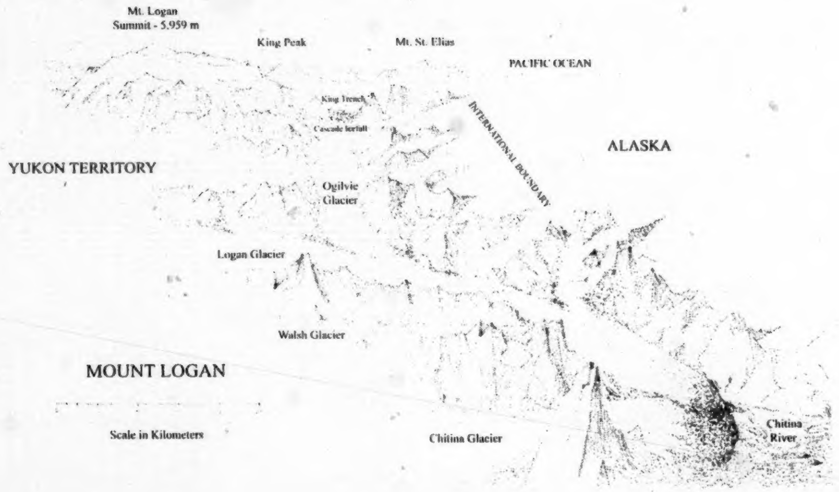
Mt. Logan
Summit - 5,959 m
King Peak
Mt. St. Elias
PACIFIC OCEAN
King Trench
Cascade Icefall
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
ALASKA
YUKON TERRITORY
Ogilvie Glacier
Logan Glacier
Walsh Glacier
MOUNT LOGAN
Scale in Kilometers
Chitina Glacier
Chitina River

Fig. 12 Author. In 1925, the unsupported approach to Mount Logan crossed the terminus of the Chitina Glacier and continued east along the Logan Glacier, finally turning southeast, following the Ogilvie Glacier, to the Cascade Icefall at the southwest base of the Logan massif. Pen and Ink Sketch, 2004.

Boundary Survey along the Yukon-Alaska border. MacCarthy's closest advisor on the expedition was British-born-Canadian Colonel William Foster, who—famed for the 1913 ascent of Mt. Robson alongside MacCarthy and Kain—was an engineer, former deputy-minister of public works for British Columbia, and the acting vice-president of the ACC.

Because MacCarthy, Lambart, and Foster were all members of the Alpine Club, "it was not felt necessary by that club, already heavily committed with its Everest expedition, to send out a special representative."[42] The decision meant, in effect, that the North American clubs were symbolically positioned to venture forth as partners without having any climber acting as a direct representative from Great Britain. Eager to assist the ACC, the American club formed its own fund-raising committee, which raised a substantial portion of the expedition budget. As its official representative on the climb, the AAC sent engineer and noted climber Allen Carpé, a veteran United States artillery officer.[43] In addition, many American climbers volunteered to pay their own expenses for a chance to join the expedition. In this capacity, the following brought the total of the climbing party to seven: Henry S. Hall, Jr., of Boston, later president of the AAC; Norman H. Read of Manchester, Massachusetts; and Robert M. Morgan of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Canadian H. M. Laing, a Dominion naturalist, and the Ottawa-born Alaskan outfitter Andy Taylor, acting as transport officer, rounded out the group (see Fig. 13).[44]

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[42] Foster, "The Story of the Expedition": 51.

Another significant contributor to the expedition was the Dominion Government of Canada. As early as 1923, the Mount Logan Executive Committee requested the services of Fred Lambart, on loan from the Department of the Interior, along with an assistant to make a photographic survey of the mountain, and a geologist.[45] Initially, the government was noncommittal to the ACC's request, and it fell to expedition organizers to convince Ottawa to participate. Throughout 1923 and 1924, Wheeler and Lambart corresponded with senior officials soliciting support.[46] Their efforts were rewarded late in 1924, when the deputy minister approved senior officials' recommendations that the services of two civil servants be made available to the endeavour. "The ascent of Mount

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[43] WMCR, M200 AC OM 17A, "Mount Logan Expedition: Second Bulletin," The American Alpine Club, 1 April 1925.

[44] Foster, "The Story of the Expedition": 50-1.

[45] WMCR, M200 AC 0 61, Wheeler to Lambart, 15 November 1923.

[46] During the 1920s, many of the ACC's senior members enjoyed close ties with numerous higher-ranking civil servants in key federal departments. For a discussion related to interactions between ACC executives and senior federal civil servants, see PearlAnn Reichwein, "'Hands Off Our National Parks': The Alpine Club of Canada and Hydro-Development Controversies in the Canadian Rockies, 1922-1930," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 6 (1995): 129-55.

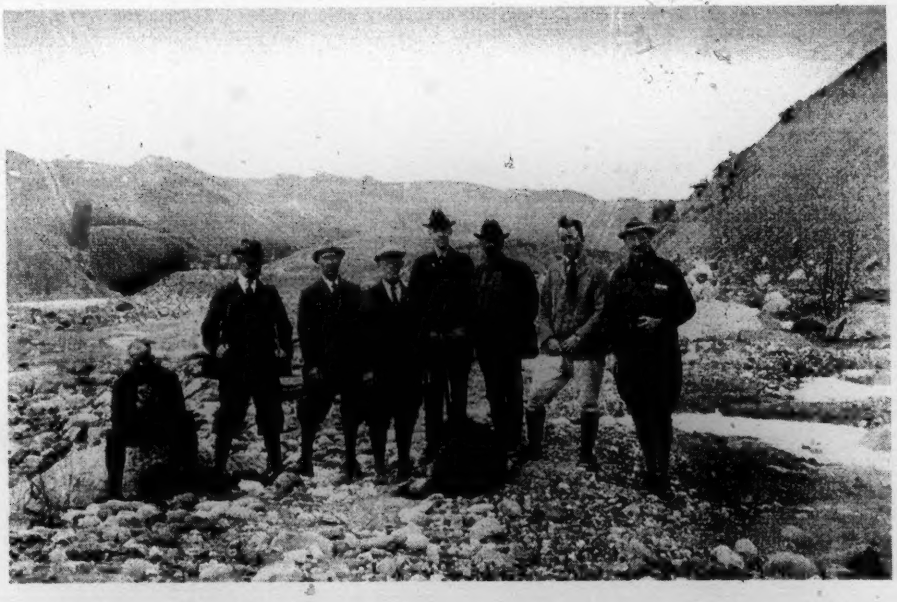

Fig. 13 Expedition members at McCarthy, Alaska. From left to right: Norman Read, Allen Carpé, William Foster, Albert MacCarthy, Henry Hall, Andrew Taylor, Robert Morgan, and Fred Lambart (with a dog in the foreground). Photograph, May 1925. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V14/AC OP-813 (39).

Logan is an important undertaking of considerable magnitude," one senior official advocated,

> and the publicity already given to it has made it a matter of international interest and importance. Dr. Deville has cited as a parallel case the Mount Everest expedition which has received assistance from many sources and the progress of which has been followed with marked attention throughout the world.[47]

Furthermore, the director general recognized and stressed the national importance of the ascent: "We are indebted to Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Lambart for preventing the attempt from becoming a purely United States undertaking."[48] The Department of the Interior provided the salaried services of Lambart, a surveyor, as the chief of topographical work and deputy leader of the expedition; the Department of Mines contributed by sending

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[47] WMCR, M200 AC 0 64, Craig to Cory, 20 December 1924.

[48] Ibid.

Laing, a biologist, whose task was to survey the flora and fauna found in the Chitina Valley, collect specimens for a natural history collection, and shoot film for a documentary of the trip that was to be produced later for public distribution. In addition, the expedition was furnished with several scientific instruments, including an aneroid barometer to measure atmospheric pressure and calculate altitude.[49]

With fine weather prevailing that spring, the Mt. Logan team, despite being burdened by heavy packs, made good progress up the Chitina Valley with the aid of a pack train of horses. Once at the terminus of the Chitina Glacier, on May 17, the pack train turned back for McCarthy. At that time, Laing set up a permanent research station in the Chitina Valley, while the remaining eight men continued towards Mt. Logan, collecting cached supplies along the way. An advanced base camp, aptly dubbed "Cascade Camp," was established thirty km beyond their last winter cache at the base of the Cascade Icefall, which, rising more than 800 metres, spilled onto the Ogilvie Glacier and barred farther advance up the mountain (see Fig. 14). "During the next two days," recalled MacCarthy, "we relayed twenty-eight packs and one Yukon sled, about 1500 pounds, to the top of Quartz Ridge over an all-snow route of varying gradients, one considerable stretch being forty-five degrees from the horizontal."[50]

From atop Quartz Ridge, with the Cascade Icefall safely beneath them, the party stood at the foot of a long, narrow glacial corridor, now called the King Trench, which

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[49] Allen Carpé, "Observations," *CAJ* 15 (1925): 82.

[50] MacCarthy, "The Climb": 59.

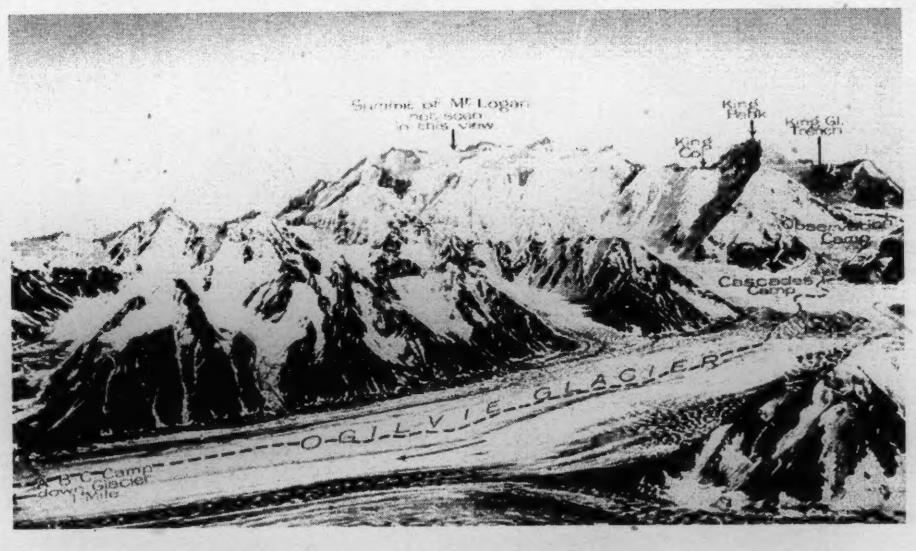
Summit of Mt Logan not seen in this view
King Peak
King Gl. Trench
King Col
Observation Camp
Cascades Camp
OGILVIE GLACIER
A.B.C. Camp down Glacier 1 Mile

Fig. 14 T.C. Dennis. Image illustrating the approach taken to Mount Logan by the 1925 expedition, as it appeared in *CAJ* 15 (1925): 48a. Photograph, 1913. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V14/AC OP-813 (93).

rose gently from beneath the north face of King Peak to King Col on the west shoulder of the Logan massif. Using an intermediate camp between the Cascade Icefall and King according to MacCarthy, proved a great disappointment because "it did not Col, the team slowly pushed their way to the crest of the Col at 4,110 metres, which, connect up with the ice slopes of the massif leading to the higher plateau by at least a thousand feet, and…this intervening stretch was a mass of very steep and badly broken ice slopes."[51] The smooth slopes of the saddle did not easily join the upper parts of the mountain. Instead, a jumbled mass of steep, broken ice blocks and crevasses filled a 300-metre gap. Above the icefall, the slope gently curled out of sight, offering little view of the upper route. On the other side of the saddle, however, the slope gently rose to the east shoulder of King Peak, from where a better view of the upper route could be gained. Thus, while Lambert led a group back down the Trench to ferry up more supplies, MacCarthy's rope team ascended the east shoulder of King Peak. From there, the only feasible way to access the upper part of the mountain, it appeared, was through the icefall.[52]

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[51] Ibid.: 62.

By June 10, with the great bulk of supplies consolidated at "King Col Camp," the weather, which had been generally cooperative, began to plague the party with a succession of storms that lasted the remainder of the expedition. Although poor visibility, deep snow, and complicated navigation hampered progress above King Col, the group finally pushed the route through the icefall and six days later established "Windy Camp" at 5,180 metres. Despite the poor conditions, supplies were ferried up above the icefall, while MacCarthy, Foster, and Read investigated the upper snowfields in an effort to find access to the summit plateau. After two attempts, both in bad weather, they finally discovered a tiny saddle at 5,550 metres, now called Prospector's Pass or AINA Col, from where the plateau could be easily gained. At the saddle, lying on their stomachs in gale-force winds, the three men peered out onto Mt. Logan's vast summit plateau and immediately realized the need for another camp. The summit was still a long way off. As the weather deteriorated, the three men descended to Windy Camp with the news.[53]

During the following two days, despite cold and blustery weather, the team carried up needed supplies from King Col to Windy Camp. On the afternoon of June 19, while en route with a load, the climbers were engulfed in a sudden storm, which, according to Carpé, "seemed almost literally to hurl us back in our tracks."[54] The weather was so bad that, at one point, the rope team of Taylor, Lambart, Hall, and

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[52] Ibid.: 62-3.

[53] Ibid.: 67.

[54] Allan Carpé, "The Mount Logan Adventure," *AAJ* 2 (1933): 79.

Morgan decided retreat was inevitable. As they veered, MacCarthy's rope team came up. MacCarthy would not consider retreat. "Taking the lead," Carpé recalled, MacCarthy "pointed the way and we followed. Pounding our feet to keep them from freezing we pushed doggedly into the teeth of the storm. I have no idea how long the fight lasted."[55] On arrival, they discovered the tents were flattened by high winds and partially buried under drifting snow. Once camp was finally rebuilt, the eight weary men collapsed in their eiderdown sleeping bags. Although several fingers had been frostbitten while the men repitched the tents, Morgan's feet were far worse. Morgan, whose toes had frozen some years before, was unable to continue because his toes had again become badly frostbitten. Graciously accompanied by Hall, Morgan descended the mountain on June 21. That afternoon, with diminished supplies, the six remaining members left Windy Camp, climbed to the upper saddle, and established a camp at 5,500 metres on edge of Mt. Logan's summit plateau. For many years afterward, "Camp Eighteen-Five," as they called it, held the record as the highest established camp in North America (see Fig. 15).

The effects of high altitude became apparent that night. "Here at our highest camp," wrote MacCarthy,

> the altitude told severely on some members and visibly affected all of us, for we seemed to be content to sit and contemplate the work to be done rather than do it; actions were painfully slow and inefficient and the smallest exertion caused rapid breathing and a desire for rest.[56]

The next morning, struggling with frozen fingers, the slow-moving party broke camp, but it was nearly mid-day before they were underway. From Prospector's Pass, their route dropped out onto the summit plateau and down a long slope that they later grimly dubbed

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[55] Ibid.: 80.

[56] MacCarthy, "The Climb": 69.

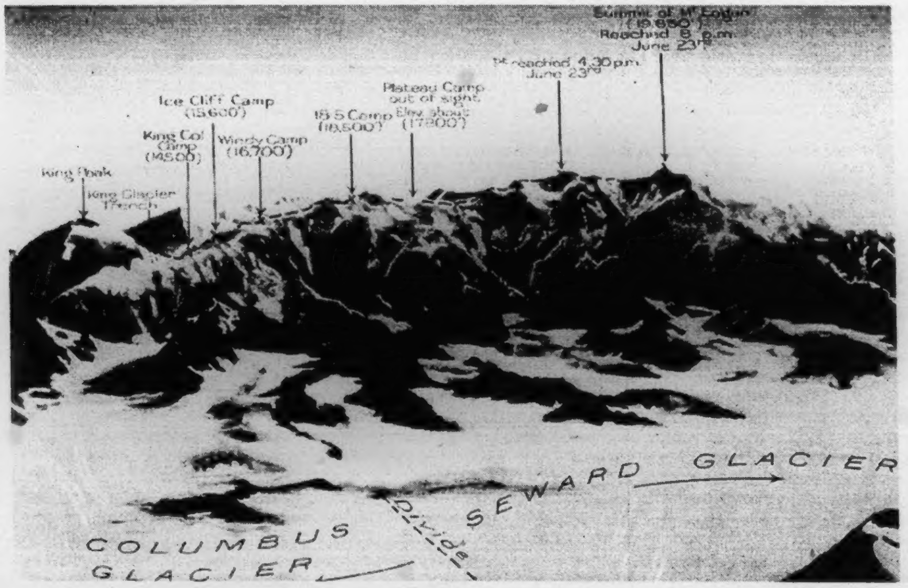
Summit of Mt Logan
(19,850')
Reached 8 p.m.
June 23rd
Pt reached 4.30 p.m.
June 23rd
Plateau Camp
out of sight
Elev. about
(17800')
18.5 Camp
(18,500')
Ice Cliff Camp
(15,600')
King Col
Camp
(14500)
Windy Camp
(16,700')
King Peak
King Glacier
Trench
SEWARD GLACIER
Divide
COLUMBUS
GLACIER

Fig. 15 Vittorio Sella. Map illustrating the camps used by the 1925 expedition on Mount Logan, as seen in *CAJ* 15 (1925): 78a. Photograph, 1897. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V14/AC OP – 813 (204).

"Hurricane Hill." Two-and-a-half kilometres down from the saddle, however, the party became mired in deep, soft snow, and, knowing they would have to re-climb the hill on their descent, decided to make their last camp on the plateau at 5,325 metres. From "Plateau Camp," stocked with provisions for eight days, the group was positioned for a summit attempt, yet, clearly, their strength would not last. The task that lay ahead, MacCarthy wrote, "will be a severe strain; must push and push fast as possible and then *some more*."[57] A blizzard continued throughout the night, but on the following day, June 23, the sun broke through the clouds, and the skies cleared by mid-morning. The weather, it appeared, offered the climbers the opportunity they needed to make a bid for the top.

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[57] Ibid.: 70.

Foster led the first rope that morning, with Carpé and MacCarthy behind him, while Lambart, Read, and Taylor followed closely on a second rope. They made good progress across the wind-packed slopes; given the numerous peaks adorning the vast upper plateau, however, it remained uncertain which one was the true summit (see Fig. 16). Exhausted, the team reached the summit of the "Double Peak," now called West Peak, at 4:30 in the afternoon, but was immediately disheartened by the view to the southeast. More than two kilometres away, they could see a slightly higher companion dome. Quickly removing his surveying level from his pack, Lambart formally confirmed what they had hoped was wrong:

> Before us now, in plain view, lay the whole eastern end of the massif of Mount Logan, and at a distance of two and a half or three miles across an intervening depression 1,000 feet below, only slightly above our present position, the true summit![58]

The party quickly set off towards Mt. Logan's main summit. Wearily, they descended to the saddle between the two peaks, cached their snowshoes, and began the steep climb up the other side toward the summit. Finally, at eight in the evening, the six mountaineers ascended the final ridge and stood on the true summit, where, according to MacCarthy,

> we all shook hands and were foolishly happy in the success of our venture and the thought that our troubles were over.... We veritably seemed to be standing on top of the world with King Peak and many others that had looked like unsurmountable [*sic*] heights now lying below us.[59]

Carpé, on the other hand, recalled, "almost automatically we went through the appointed routine: hand-clasps and congratulations, a round of motion pictures, the

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[58] H.F. Lambart, "The Conquest of Mount Logan," *The National Geographic Magazine* 49, 6 (Jun. 1926): 622.

[59] MacCarthy, "The Climb": 73.

Fig. 16 Author. The view southeast across the summit plateau from approximately where the 1925 expedition built their highest camp. Note the various sub-peaks of Mount Logan (from left to right): East Peak, West Peak (or "Double Peak"), Houston's Peak, and Russell Peak. The main summit is hidden from view behind West Peak. Photograph, June 2003.

empty gesture of a record of names and date thrust in the snow."[60] Their celebrations were brief. From the summit, Taylor noticed clouds amassing in the southwest, between mounts St. Elias and Augusta, but it was already too late.[61]

As the fog rolled in, the party descended from the main peak to the saddle and was engulfed by the oncoming storm. In a few short minutes, the winds rose and thick clouds enveloped the plateau in a complete whiteout. Disoriented, they were forced to spend the night huddled in snow caves, above 5,000 metres and lost, with only their clothes to keep them warm. The storm continued unabated throughout the night and the following morning. "The party was in deplorable condition," remembered Lambart, "for all were suffering more or less from frozen fingers and the effects of snow blindness, while one member, due to tight socks, had the toes on both feet frozen while he slept."[62] Remarkably, they all survived the night.

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[60] Carpé, "The Mount Logan Adventure": 82.

[61] Lambart, "The Conquest of Mount Logan": 626.

The party did not start moving until two o'clock the following afternoon, with Taylor carefully leading the way through the flat light. Groping through the clouds, the party eventually spotted the willow wands that, left behind on the approach, marked their route back to their high camp. "Our pace was quickened," Lambart wrote, "as we followed from twig to twig, not daring to allow the last man on the rope to leave the rear twig until the one forward had been found."[63] Blindly following the wands, Taylor, Lambart, and Read eventually reached Plateau Camp at 8:30 that night. MacCarthy, Carpé, and Foster, the most experienced mountaineers of the group, however, were not so fortunate. Having to stop to tighten a pack strap, the second rope team lost sight of the advance party. The team renewed its pace in an attempt to catch up with Taylor's rope. It took them an hour to realize their mistake. Momentarily disoriented in the storm, the three men had turned themselves around and were heading back towards the summit. They corrected their error, but, as darkness descended, they were forced to spend a second night out, often hallucinating from a combination of dehydration, exhaustion, and exposure. "High cliffs of ice would seem to rise up before us to block our way," recalled MacCarthy,

> and yet we never encountered them; barns and shelters would suddenly appear that we knew could not exist, for otherwise one's companions would surely suggest taking refuge in them; thus we trudged on, taking two restless naps in miserable little holes we scooped out for ourselves.[64]

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[62] Ibid.: 628.

[63] Lambart, "The Conquest of Mount Logan": 628.

With dawn, the fog lifted from the plateau, and, with what little strength remained, MacCarthy, Carpé, and Lambart rejoined the others at Plateau Camp after being out for forty-two hours. Had the storm continued, the three men would almost certainly have perished. They spent the next twenty-four hours eating and sleeping to recover.

The return to civilization took over two weeks and the party was plagued by disaster at every turn (see Fig. 17). Nevertheless, on July 15, all nine original members reunited in McCarthy, Alaska, successful in their venture. Although the details of their achievement thrilled the mountaineering world, precedence for ascents other than "firsts" had not yet gained widespread currency in the North American climbing ethos; thus, it was twenty-five years before anyone attempted the mountain again.[65]

Canada's Everest and the Politics of Nationhood

In early twentieth-century Canada, the literature of imperialism was largely characterized by a sincere attachment to the Dominion. Far from denigrating things "Canadian," the imperial-minded intelligentsia commonly held utopian expectations for the youthful country, and it was precisely this overestimation that strengthened their conviction that Canada would become "the future centre and dominating portion of the British Empire."[66] The appeal of imperialism in Canada, however, significantly declined

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[64] MacCarthy, "The Climb": 77.

[65] Mt. Logan was successfully climbed for the second time in 1950, via the King Trench Route. The team comprised of well-known Swiss climber André Roch, Alaskan trapper Seevert Jacobson, and Norman Read, who was a member of the 1925 expedition. In 1950, Read was sixty years old. See H.S. Hall, Jr., "Mt. Logan: Second and Third Ascents," *AAJ* 8 (1951): 191.

[66] W.D. Lighthall, *Canada, A Modern Nation* (Montreal: Witness Print House, 1904), 78; Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 260-61.

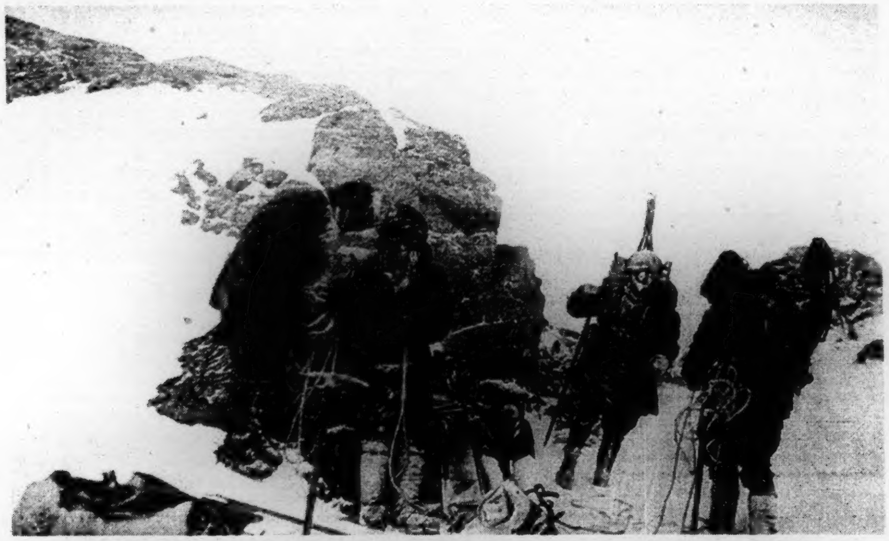

Fig. 17 Norman Read. Group in poor condition at Prospector's Col (or AINA Pass) upon returning from the successful summit attempt only days earlier. From left to right: Andrew Taylor, William Foster, Allen Carpé, Fred Lambert, and Albert MacCarthy. The image appeared in *CAJ* 15 (1925): 76a. Photograph, June 26, 1925. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V14/AC OP – 813 (211).

after the First World War, as early enthusiasm for participation was replaced with disenchantment and disillusionment. By 1918, sixty thousand Canadians lay dead in Europe. This fact alone overshadowed and dominated all discussions of Empire, imperialism, and Canadian nationhood, and fuelled the emerging isolationist attitudes of the period. Organized farmers and French Canadians alike, for instance, loudly rejected active membership in the Empire and feared that a common imperial foreign policy might lead the country, without consent, into another European conflict.

Any dream of Canada becoming a senior partner in "a new and greater Imperial Commonwealth," arguably ended when Liberal leader William Lyon Mackenzie King became Canada's tenth prime minister in December 1921.[67] Because he considered himself the protégé of Sir Wilfred Laurier, King consciously followed his mentor's policy of "passive resistance to involvement in British Councils."[68] Nowhere was this more apparent than when England petitioned Canada for aid in a possible war with the Turks at Chanak in 1922. Britain's Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, rallied the dominions and expressed that "the foreign policy of the Empire must be made in concert."[69] In Ottawa, Churchill's appeal inspired opposition-leader Arthur Meighen to utter an instinctive "ready, aye ready." From King, however, it drew resentful silence. Canada made no advance commitments to support British external policies, and there was no "blank cheque" given to England "to be filled in at a moment's notice without reference to a particular situation that might arise."[70] If more public gestures were needed, King boldly sent *Canadien* Ernest Lapointe to Washington in 1923 to sign the Pacific Halibut Fisheries Treaty without the proffered assistance from Great Britain. On the issue, King's position was unyielding: "Let British diplomats manage British affairs and let us manage our own…."[71] For Canada, the Halibut Treaty, despite its mundane subject, set a historic precedent. Moreover, it single-handedly signified American recognition of Canada's emerging international status.[72]

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[67] C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: Volume 2: 1921 – 1948: The Mackenzie King Era: A History of Canadian External Policies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 71.

During King's long prime ministership, totalling twenty-two years between 1921 and 1948, Canada grew more distant from Britain and closer to the United States diplomatically, economically, and culturally. The twenties was the first decade of mass-produced culture, and the American peaceful infiltration of Canada seemed to be occurring at an unprecedented rate. Powerful American radio stations carried signals into the most populated parts of Canada, and American wealth poured over the border in the form of investment. Considering "the excitement and prosperity of the United States," historian Desmond Morton wrote that "Canada, with its frugal comforts, its low wages, its backwater vision of itself, had never been more immediately or more dangerously challenged."[73] Canadian children "bowed down to Babe Ruth," and the "National" Hockey League, when it opened its 1926-1927 season, successfully transformed Canada's winter game into a continental commercial spectacle.[74]

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[68] Thompson and Seager, *Canada*, 40.

[69] Ibid., 43.

[70] "Statement by King to the Imperial Conference," 17 Oct. 1923, in James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada, I, From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 329-31.

[71] Thompson and Seager, *Canada*, 50.

[72] Political trends continued to build the path towards independent decision making in Canadian external affairs and national policy throughout the 1920s, culminating in 1931 with the signing of the Statute of Westminster, which completed the development of Canada's autonomous dominion status.

Yet, another set of examples, could easily depict this period as the cradle of Canadian cultural identity, a decade swept up in the nation-building enthusiasm stimulated by the war. This apparent contradiction suggests that, for many Canadians, the much-talked-of "invisible border" was simultaneously a very real barrier. The Ottawa correspondent for *The Times* of London made a similar observation, concluding in 1930 that "the people of Canada are imbued with…a passion to maintain their own separate identity. They cherish the rooted belief that they enjoy in their existing political and social order certain manifest advantages over their neighbours."[75]

Canadian sport was instrumental in constructing the nation as a coherent identity during the 1920s; it was particularly effective, of course, when a Canadian underdog finished ahead of the American favourite. It should be no surprise, then, that the first ascent of Mt. Logan was heralded as a singular and superlative triumph in the Canadian press. The front page of the Toronto *Globe* headlined "Highest of the Canadian Rockies is Conquered by Expedition of Amateur Alpine Climbers," further noting, "Mount Logan is Finally Scaled by Members of the Alpine Club of Canada" and "Amazing Sight from Peak." The ascent also made front-page news internationally.[76] Differences in press coverage suggest the contingent nature of national identities. The *Toronto Daily Star*, for example, headlined "Mt. Logan Has Been Climbed for First Time: Party of Six Canadians Reported Back From Successful Climb, Americans Drop Out, Bitter Cold and Blinding Blizzard Was Fought by the Hardy Alpinists." In reference to MacCarthy, the *Calgary Daily Herald* ran a headline that read, "Amateur Climbers Battle Storms and Extreme Cold to Scale Mount Logan: Canadian Leads Climbers to Logan Peak." By contrast, the *New York Times* announced "Mt. Logan Scaled by Six Climbers: American in the Lead" and further stressed "Americans and Canadians First to Reach Top of Yukon Peak, Towering 20,000 Feet." *The Times* of London correspondent reported "Mount Logan Climbed, Canadian Party's Exploit."[77]

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[73] Desmond Morton, *A Short History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), 193.

[74] Robert Arye, "The American Empire," *Canadian Forum* (Jan. 1927): 105-06; F.B. Edwards, "High Hat Hockey," *MacLean's Magazine* 40 (Dec. 1927): 5-6.

[75] J.A. Stevenson, "Canadian Sentiment toward the U.S.," *Current History* XXXIII (Oct. 1930): 60-4.

In mountaineering narratives and popular literature, Mt. Logan was time after time compared and contrasted to Mt. Everest. Arguably, the trend was initiated in 1890 by Israel C. Russell, who, by naming Mt. Logan in honour of the Geological Survey of Canada's founder, Sir William Logan, emulated the earlier example of India's Surveyor General, Sir Andrew Waugh. It was Waugh who, in 1865, bestowed the name "Mount Everest" on Peak XV—only after it was deemed the highest mountain in the world—in honour of his predecessor, Sir George Everest.[78] Nevertheless, it was much later, once Mt. Everest became the index by which mountain explorers would measure their high-altitude exploits, that Mt. Logan, in numerous regards, was symbolically hoisted onto the Tibetan Plateau. This tendency appeared as early as 1922, when, writing in the *CAJ*, Sir James Outram brought the idea of climbing Mt. Logan back to the forefront. "A few weeks ago," Outram wrote,

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[76] After 1924, the Dalai Lama closed the borders of Tibet to climbers. See Unsworth, *Everest*, 142-57. Unable to return to Mt. Everest in 1925, the English-speaking climbing fraternity turned its attention to the frontiers of North America. Attributed largely to the publicity garnished by the British deaths on Mt. Everest in 1924, public attention had never been so focused on exploratory mountaineering feats.

[77] "Highest of Canadian Rockies is Conquered by Expedition of Amateur Alpine Climbers," *The Globe* (15 July 1925): 1; "Mt. Logan Peak has been climbed for First Time," *Toronto Daily Star* (14 July 1925): 1; "Amateur Climbers Battle Storms and Extreme Cold to Scale Mount Logan," *Calgary Daily Herald* (14 July 1925): 1; "Mount Logan Scaled by Six Climbers; American in Lead," *New York Times* (15 July 1925): 1; "Mt. Logan Climbed: Canadian Party's Exploit," *Times* (15 July 1925): 14. *The Globe* erroneously situated Mt. Logan in the Canadian Rockies.

> I saw, in passing, a suggestion by, I believe, Prof. Coleman, which seemed like a 'Challenge' to the Alpine Club of Canada… Referring to the expedition to Mt. Everest, stimulated by the Alpine Club in the Old Land, he mooted the idea that a singular enterprise, on of course, a much more modest scale, might be undertaken by our Club, to reach the summit of the loftiest peak in Canada, Mt. Logan, well over 19,000 feet above sea level, and second only to Mt. McKinley on the North American Continent.[79]

Following the successful Mt. Logan ascent, the *CAJ* dedicated its 1925 issue to the exhaustive documentation and celebration of the expedition. The special issue was replete with correlative allusions to Mt. Everest. Writing the introductory essay titled "An Appreciation," the acting president of the ACC, Joseph Hickson, measured Mt. Logan as follows: "Although over 9,000 feet lower than Mt. Everest, Logan is 1500 miles nearer the North Pole [than Everest is to the south pole], a circumstance which tends to equalize the temperatures around the two peaks."[80] In "A Few More Words of

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[78] Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest": 15.

[79] James Outram, "Mt. Logan," *CAJ* 12 (1922): 183.

Appreciation," Wheeler continued in this fashion, noting that the inherent support the ACC's ascent afforded their downtrodden British brethren in the wake of Mallory and Irvine's disappearance. Later, MacCarthy fashioned Mt. Logan as "the mightiest hump of Nature in the Western Hemisphere if not the largest in the world."[81]

Expedition accounts appeared in a variety of other alpine journals and popular magazines, including the *AAJ*, *Appalachia*, *The Mountaineer*, *The Geographical Journal*, and, of course, *The National Geographic Magazine*, where, as in the 1925 *CAJ*, Mt. Logan was continually compared in stature to Mt. Everest. This propensity was so pervasive that even some contemporary descriptions of the 1925 ascent have since adopted its rhetoric. For instance, in Paddy Sherman's "Mount Logan: Mightiest Hump of Nature," written in 1965, the mountain was framed as follows: "in its eternal armour of snow and ice, and in the grim ferocity of its defences, it is no mean match for Everest itself."[82] Sherman continued to belabour the point, suggesting "if Logan's uplift above its base were to be superimposed on a Tibetan interior plateau, it would rank with Everest."[83]

Presenting Mt. Logan in this regard was particularly attractive in the imagination of both North American and British climbers. For Canada, the imagined challenge of Mt. Logan offered a type of symbolic potential far beyond just any unexplored space or mountain, particularly during the interwar era, when impressive-sounding international achievement bolstered the growing nationalist movement. Akin to the value placed on

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[80] Hickson, "An Appreciation": 3.

[81] Wheeler, "A Few More Words": 9; MacCarthy, "Preliminary Explorations": 27.

[82] Sherman, *Cloudwalkers*, 1.

[83] Ibid., 1.

the North and South Pole, the currency accorded to the Canadian endeavour redefined Canada's position on the modern world stage of exploratory mountaineering, and sent out a clear message that the youthful country had fully arrived within the ambit of self-determination. Having reached the summit of Mt. Logan, Canadians could stake a claim to autonomous nationhood within the imperial tradition of British exploration. The close integration of Canadian and American involvement in the expedition, however, along with the peripheral participation of Britain, suggests a subtext to the narrative. Canada was undergoing a process of realignment with the United States, symbolized through exploratory mountaineering in the northern frontiers of Alaska and the Yukon. If Mt. Everest was Britain's mountain and acted as a symbolic suture for waning British colonial power, Mt. Logan was an allegory of Canadian postcolonial nationhood in the age of rising American imperialism.

CHAPTER FOUR

Off the Beaten Path? Ski Mountaineering and the Weight of Tradition in the Canadian Rockies, 1909-1940

Cultural invention is not born from a bolt out of the blue but... look right there in the worn out myth....[1]

Craig J. Saper

Easily accessible from the Icefields Parkway, either at Peyto or Bow Lake, the Wapta Icefields have, in recent decades, become the premier destination in the Canadian Rockies for general mountaineering and alpine ski touring, and are now serviced by a chain of four mountain huts, owned and operated by The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC).[2] Although climbers first explored the icefields in the late 1800s, the first ski exploration of the area did not occur until the early 1930s, a decade that marked the beginning of a rich tradition of ski mountaineering in the range.[3] Until very recently, however, the dominant historiography of mountaineering in Canada offered a very different story. With the closing of the sport's so-called "golden age" in 1925, after the majority of the more prominent peaks in the Rocky and Columbia Mountains had been first ascended by climbers, mountaineering in Canada has been consistently disregarded by popular historians, at least until the early 1950s, when newly-arrived European and British immigrants initiated a new era of technical climbing.[4] However, although it is fair to argue that practices in the Canadian ranges had drifted from the mainstream of international trends during the intervening years, mountaineering was undergoing a significant transformation with the adaptation of ski mountaineering, a form of mountaineering that continues to be an integral thread in the fabric of mountaineering in Canada to this day.

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[1] Craig J. Sapir, *Artificial Mythologies: A Guide to Cultural Invention* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 169.

[2] See Keith Haberl, *Alpine Huts: A Guide to the Facilities of the Alpine Club of Canada* (Canmore: The Alpine Club of Canada, 1997); Murray Toft, *Touring the Wapta Icefields: A Marked Route Map for Skiers and Climbers with Accompanying Photos* (Calgary: Druid Mountain Enterprises, 1996).

[3] One of the earliest recorded explorations of the Wapta Icefields was made by an Anglo-American team, which included Englishman John Norman Collie and Swiss guide Peter Sarbach, in 1897. See Stutfield and Collie, *Climbs and Explorations*, 16-38.

By the late 1920s, the growth of interest in skiing and its extension to the mountain regions of Canada had led to the ascent of mountain peaks partly or wholly on skis during the long winter months, a season usually two-to-three times the length of the average summer climbing season. The introduction of skis to mountaineering was, nevertheless, a slow process. Commenting on the situation in British Columbia's Coast Range, John Baldwin, a Vancouver-based mountaineer and guidebook author, jokingly remarked that "this is not too surprising as climbers have never been noted for their skiing ability."[5] Baldwin's witticism aside, the emergence of ski mountaineering was hindered by various social and physical barriers. Chief among these factors, according to historian Donald Wetherell, was the winter climate itself: "Winter provided unique opportunities for specialized sports," he wrote, "and often created free time for recreation, but at the same time it often brought seasonal unemployment and restricted income, travel, and communications."[6] Coupled with these problems were the widely-held local assumptions that the winter backcountry of the high Rocky and Columbia Mountains was perilous, prone to the fearsome—and poorly understood—phenomenon of avalanches. Furthermore, as an imported winter pastime from Europe, skiing was completely unfamiliar to most locals, who, during the early decades of the twentieth century, adamantly maintained that the snowshoe was the only sensible means of travelling through the deep mountain snows of winter.[7]

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[4] "Technical climbing" requires the use of ropes and fixed belay anchors on either rock or ice. It includes any sustained climbing where, generally speaking, the arms are used to pull upward rather than being used solely for balance.

[5] John Baldwin, "A History of Ski Mountaineering in the Coast Range," *CAJ* 66 (1983): 24. Baldwin is best known for his guidebook to ski touring in the Coast Mountains. See John Baldwin, *Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis* (Vancouver: John Baldwin Books, 1994).

This chapter presents a case study of the early development of ski mountaineering in the Rocky Mountains of Canada. It combines an emphasis on the early adaptation of skiing as part of a larger process of economic and cultural production during the early decades of the twentieth century, with parallel attention to the form in which ski mountaineering was both promoted and constrained throughout the interwar period by the ACC.[8] With the annual publication of the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*), first printed in 1907, the club successfully singled out and conferred status on mountain climbers and their exploits, thereby rewarding conventional practices with acclaim and legitimation.[9] Practices contrary to convention were met with quiet reproach or derision.[10] By the 1920s, however, commercial and ideological challenges to the club's self-styled authority became increasingly evident, if not explicit, in the journal's narratives, as the club's executive negotiated the awkward accommodation of amateurism to the advancing tide of consumer culture that flooded north across the American border.[11]

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[6] Donald G. Wetherell, "A Season of Mixed Blessings: Winter and Leisure in Alberta Before World War II," *Winter Sports in the West*, ed. E.A. Corbet and A.W. Rasporich (Calgary: The Historical Society of Alberta/University of Calgary Press, 1990), 38.

[7] Scandinavian immigrants, mostly, first brought skiing to western Canada around the turn of the century. It was an activity that was deeply ingrained in their culture, and, in some ways, according to historian Jorgen Dahlie, served to ease the transition from the Old World to the New. See Jorgen Dahlie, "Skiing for Identity and Tradition: Scandinavian Venture and Adventure in the Pacific Northwest, 1900-1960," *Winter Sports in the West*, ed. Corbet and Rasporich, 99.

[8] While some recent scholarly histories have examined the development of early skiing in North America within its wider social and economic context, most logically track skiing's progression from its Nordic roots to early mechanization in North America or concentrate on the emergence of modern mass-leisure resort skiing. One good example is E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). Another is Annie Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). Few histories, if any, however, have critically examined the direction skiing took into the mountain backcountry of western Canada.

The accounts written in the *CAJ* provide an opportunity to reflect upon the cultural diffusion and adaptation of mountaineering in the Canadian ranges. The ACC did not spring up in Canadian isolation.[12] Its members belonged to a broader fraternity of English-speaking mountaineers and, like them, were members of the imperial community. Their writings played a strategic role in the location of skiing within the wider framework of Victorian mountaineering, and served to confirm and legitimate Anglo-Canadian hegemony. Examining the processes and struggles of this shift, this case study is informed to a great extent by the accounts written in the club's journal between 1925 and 1940, a period loosely framed by the ending of the era now celebrated as the

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[9] The hegemony produced by alpine journals, regarding the ethics, form, and style of mountaineering, dates back to the mid-nineteenth century in Britain. See Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class": 579-601; Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 242. For the situation in Canada, see Robinson, "The Golden Years": 3, 9. Information about the criteria and selection process used by the *CAJ*'s early editorship, however, is extremely vague. Such information would, no doubt, add to our understanding of power and ideology embedded in early mountaineering literature and practice.

[10] The controversy surrounding the George Kinney's disputed ascent of Mt. Robson in 1909 is a prime example. See Zac Robinson, "Storming the Heights: Canadian Frontier Nationalism and the Making of Manhood in the Conquest of Mount Robson, 1906-1913," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, 3 (May 2005): 415-433.

[11] The rise of consumer culture during the 1920s and its resulting effect on Canadian sport is discussed by Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 50-82, 91-6. The trend in the United States is addressed by Mark Dyreson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American sport in the 1920s," *Journal of Sport History* 15, 3 (Winter 1989): 140-67.

[12] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 39.

"Glory Days of Canadian Mountaineering" and Canada's entry in the Second World War.[13] A wider context is provided through a consideration of skiing's expanding coverage in the print media. First, however, the emergence of ski mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies is set out in the context of an even earlier period.

Early Skiing in the Canadian Rockies, 1909-1929

When the west-bound passenger train arrived in Banff on March 4, 1928, six pairs of skis were unloaded onto the station platform, quickly followed by poles, knapsacks, and other equipment necessary for exploring the Rockies. Local bystanders apparently "looked on in amazement."[14] The winter carnival that year had ended weeks earlier, and most skis had long been returned to the attic. It would have appeared likely that a mistake had been made. In fact, there was hardly enough snow in Banff to ski on that spring. Shortly after, however, the owners themselves—four men and two women—disembarked from the train, and it became quite apparent to the locals at the station that this group was not from Banff. Far from it: they were considered "Easterners—dudes. Can you beat that?"[15]

The owners of the skis were Erling Strom, the Marquis degli Albizzi, and their eastern-American clients Catherine Arnold, Louise Carson, "Toots" Graves, and Gurney Smith. Strom was a Norwegian athlete and ski instructor from Lake Placid, New York, and, like many Scandinavians, he had learned to ski at a very young age. "I lived the first eight years of my life above timberline in one of the snowiest parts of Norway," Strom later recalled. "This not only gave me a chance to ski, but made skiing necessary from the time I learned to walk." Before arriving in North America in 1919, Strom competed in Stockholm at the 1917 Nordic Games, a wintertime festival of sports that was a precursor to the modern Winter Olympic Games.[16] In 1926, while in the United States, Strom met the Marquis Nicholas degli Albizzi, a half-Russian, half-Italian nobleman, who had commanded a regiment of Italian alpine troops during the First World War. Albizzi was the winter sport's director at the Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks, where, by the 1920s, recreational skiing had become an increasingly popular pastime among the middle classes. On the recommendation of Albizzi, the club hired Strom in the winter of 1927, and Strom became one of the first professional ski instructors in North America.[17]

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[13] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*," 38.

[14] Erling Strom, "What the Dudes Did Do," *CAJ* 22 (1933): 167; Erling Strom, *Pioneers on Skis* (Central Valley: Smith Clove Press, 1977), 113-14.

[15] Strom, "What the Dudes Did Do": 167.

Despite the dramatic growth of professionalism in North America during this period, the ideals of amateurism were still firmly rooted in Scandinavian sport. The middle European countries had agreed to the so-called "open competitions" in skiing, where instructors—or paid professionals—were permitted to participate; however, professionalism held little sway in Norway, and the Norwegian Ski Association, founded in 1883, was not prepared to bend to changing times. The state of affairs was "utterly ridiculous" to liberal-minded Strom, who pressed Norwegian sport officials to consider the potential commercial benefits derived from skiing. To the moral crusaders, his suggestions held little appeal: "When I mentioned what it could mean to Norwegian export and Norwegian tourism they became positively disgusted with me. Did I really think they would stoop to consider financial benefits from our national sport?" Their departing remark to Strom was one he would never forget: "Mr. Strom, you must have been too long in America." It was clear to Strom, however, "that they themselves had not been here long enough."[18] The sanctity of amateurism in North American sport was gradually waning during the 1920s, and the process was further exacerbated by the mass unemployment of the thirties. Increasingly detached from its earlier mission of social rehabilitation, sport was increasingly understood as "a vehicle for entertainment—one of the many items available for amusement in a culture that glorified consumption."[19] While the centre of these developments was largely in the United States, Canada was not devoid of these trends.[20]

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[16] Strom, *Pioneers on Skis*, 3, 9. The Nordic Games was the first international multi-sport winter event, though the vast majority of participants came from Sweden, Norway, and Finland, with very few from other countries. In fact, of the eight Nordic Games that were held, only one was hosted outside Sweden. While the games survived the First World War, the social and economic turmoil following the war led to their discontinuation after 1926. See P. Jorgensen, "From Balck to Nurmi: The Olympic Movement and the Nordic Nations," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 14, 3 (Dec. 1997): 69-99.

[17] Strom, *Pioneers on Skis*, x.

The commercial potential of skiing lured Strom and Albizzi to the Canadian Rockies in 1928. Albizzi had first visited the range the previous summer and was impressed by the beauty of the Mount Assiniboine area. Strom, enthused by Albizzi's account, was easily convinced that the winter potential of the area was worth exploring; thus, with clients who were "paying through the nose," Strom and Albizzi travelled to Banff the following March.[21] Their reception was a cold one. Rumours quickly circulated through the town that the group planned to ski from Banff to the ACC cabins

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[18] Ibid., 57-8

[19] Dyreson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture": 261.

[20] Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 79-93.

[21] Strom, *Pioneers on Skis*, 114.

(now the Naiset Huts) at Mt. Assiniboine meadows, on the shores of Lake Magog, via Brewster Creek and Allenby Pass.[22] The locals were aghast. The fifty-kilometre trip had never been done before in winter; in fact, it was hard enough in the summertime with horses. The group was advised not to go "because of the great danger of avalanches."[23] They were stopped on the main street of Banff by Tom Wilson, the famous early outfitter, who asked Strom if he was "one of these here people who were trying to bring a bunch of dudes to Assiniboine this time of year." Strom replied that he was, but the "old-timer" had not finished with him: "He told me that there ought to be 'open season' on people like us," Strom recalled. "Our chances of reaching Assiniboine were nil. We would likely be taken by avalanches, get lost, or freeze to death en route if we were foolish enough to start at all."[24] Knowledgeable if conservative, Wilson was motivated by a concern for their safety.

There is little written evidence of backcountry skiing in the Canadian Rockies before Strom and Albizzi arrived in 1928. The first skis appeared in Banff around the turn of the century, at which time the number of skiers, according to Parks Canada historian William Yeo, was probably less than half-a-dozen.[25] Banff, then, was still a very small, one-industry frontier town situated within the fledgling Rocky Mountains Park, Canada's first national park and precursor to today's Banff National Park. Not yet a year-round attraction, the park virtually shut down during the cold months that followed

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[22] The cabins, which were leased to the ACC during the early 1920s, had served as summer accommodations for Arthur Wheeler's old "Public Riding and Walking Tours" from Banff to Assiniboine and the South Kananaskis.

[23] Strom, "What the Dudes Did Do": 167.

[24] Strom, *Pioneers on Skis*, 114-16.

[25] William B. Yeo, "Making Banff a Year-Round Park," Corbet and Rasporich, eds., 87.

September: many local businesses closed and commerce was brought, almost, to a halt. Nevertheless, the permanent population of the town made the best of the winter, and many residents actively participated in such off-season pastimes as hockey and curling, as well as tobogganing: "a sport in which Banff," Yeo remarked wryly, "enjoyed certain natural advantages over communities on the prairie."[26]

Skiing was first widely introduced to Banff through ski jumping, and, as in most places throughout North America at the turn of the century, people largely assumed that "skiers must jump."[27] One of the earliest promoters of ski jumping in Banff was the Austrian mountain guide Conrad Kain, who, at the invitation of the ACC, first arrived in the Canadian Rockies in 1909 to work at the club's summer mountaineering camps.[28] In addition to making a positive impression on the ACC, the twenty-seven-year-old guide equally impressed the residents of Banff by building a ski run down the slopes of Tunnel Mountain and onto Cariboo Street during the early spring of 1910 (see Fig. 17). The run included a small jump at which local children often gathered to watch Kain jump. Several Banff youngsters, such as Cyril Paris and Peter White, fashioned their own improvised skis from old toboggans, adding leather straps to the hardwood slats.[29] Their enthusiasm, under Kain's leadership, led to the formation of Banff's first ski club in

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[26] Ibid., 88.

[27] Strom, "What the Dudes Did Do": 168.

[28] Fair though this assessment may be, it is well to remember that there were earlier cases, albeit few, in which skis were employed in the Banff area. According to sport historian Rolf Lund, for example, "there is evidence of skis being used as early as 1887 when Scandinavian axemen, working on railway construction crews around Silver City [now a ghost town near Castle Junction, Banff National Park], made skis by hand and used them on the job during the winter months." Rolf T. Lund, "The Development of Skiing in Banff," *Alberta History* 25, 4 (Fall 1977): 26.

[29] According to Cyril Paris, the first known set of skis used by a resident of Banff belonged to his father, George Harrison Paris. They were given to him by a Norwegian-American visitor, who, in the winter of 1894, had been a guest of the Brett Sanitarium Hotel, where George Paris worked. WMCR, M68

Fig. 17 George Noble. Conrad Kain jumping on Tunnel Mountain. Photograph, 1910. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V622 PA 128-12.

February 1911. "The people seem to take to this sport," observed Kain, only weeks after founding the club: "We practice every Sunday, jumping as well, and many people assemble. My longest jump is fifty feet, about twelve feet beyond the last record."[30]

Despite the growing interest in ski jumping, the preferred form of winter ambulation among local recreationalists, packers and outfitters, and early mountaineers

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2, "Early Skiing in Banff -- recalled by Cyril Paris," unpublished manuscript, Banff, 1965. Peter White later changed the spelling of his name to "Whyte."

[30] Kain, *Where The Clouds Can Go*, 275. Because equipment was still difficult to obtain in the Canadian west at that time, Kain's Norwegian telemark skis were copied by Jack Stanley, at his Minnewanka lumber and boat works, and supplied to local enthusiasts.

was snowshoeing. Nowhere was this bias more evident than in the early pages of the *CAJ*, where, prior to 1915, the very idea of venturing into the winter alpine was adamantly contested. "Winter mountaineering" was first cautiously commemorated deep in the back matter of the volume of the *CAJ* for 1910 by Vancouver-based mountaineer Basil S. Darling, who was a leading early climber in Canada. In his brief account, Darling reported on numerous wintertime ascents made of the low-lying, heavily-forested mountains north of Vancouver by members of both the ACC and the Vancouver Mountaineering Club. Snowshoes were used for mobility, while skis, incidentally, "did not prove so useful."[31] His appraisal should not be too surprising. The extensive glaciated terrain of the high Coast Mountains had not yet been discovered by climbers, and skiing through dense brush was as appealing then as it is now. Even more intriguing, though, was the way Darling began his article: "In the past winter, although, *naturally* [emphasis added], little high mountaineering was done in the Rockies or Selkirks, a good deal of climbing in the Coast Range was accomplished…."[32] Winter mountaineering in the (seemingly) larger ranges was an unacceptable practice in 1910, at least according to Darling and the editor of the *CAJ*.

If club members needed another reminder, the Jasper outfitter Donald "Curly" Phillips provided it in a journal article describing the winter conditions north and west of Mount Robson in 1915. In contrast to Darling, however, Phillips—possibly in an attempt to stimulate business during the slow winter months—strongly encouraged winter recreation in the backcountry of the Rockies. "For the lover of the mountains," he wrote,

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[31] B.S. Darling, "Winter Mountaineering at the Coast," *CAJ* 2, 2 (1910): 198.

[32] Ibid.: 198.

> there is no reason why he should not enjoy a winter time equally as well as a summer one, provided he is properly equipped. The mountains are just as beautiful and interesting, and travelling is much simpler with all the rough places smoothed over by snow. Windfalls and brush disappear under ample covering; there are no dangerous fords to cross, no silt-filled streams. All the water is as clear as crystal, none coming down from the glaciers during the winter months. Everything is clear and bright and the mountains covered with a dazzling white mantle of snow.[33]

Proper equipment, according to Phillips, included woollen underwear, a mackinaw coat for sleeping in the open air, buckskin moccasins with liners, several pairs of thick socks, and snowshoes. Considering actual mountaineering during this season, Phillips concluded, quite unequivocally, that "of course, during the snowy winter months climbing is too dangerous to be indulged as a pastime. Leave that to the goats!"[34] No mention was made in either Darling's or Phillips' accounts that women might enjoy the winter backcountry.

Skiing's first boost in the Canadian Rockies, arguably, came with the rise of the wintertime tourist economy in Banff. The financial benefits of winter sports generated interest from the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), which, after expanding and modernizing its Banff Springs Hotel in 1910, turned its extensive advertising efforts towards promoting Banff as a year-round destination. Conrad Kain, himself, in fact, recalled being approached by a CPR representative at his club's first winter-sport festival in the spring of 1911:

> At our winter-sport festival we had more than 400 onlookers. It lasted all night. We had more than 100 lamps. A tent was put up and refreshments sold. We collected fifty-five dollars. I think I have made a good beginning. Yesterday a lady, sent by the railroad, came to me for information as to the possibilities here for ski and toboggan. I talked to her about sport for nearly two hours.[35]

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[33] Donald Phillips, "Winter Conditions North and West of Mount Robson," *CAJ* 6 (1914-15): 187.

[34] Ibid.

Prominent local businessmen took notice, as well. In 1912, for example, Norman Luxton, owner of Banff's *Crag and Canyon* newspaper, published Banff's first comprehensive visitor's guide, a promotional booklet entitled *50 Switzerlands in One: Banff the Beautiful*.[36] While ski jumping went without mention in the 1912 edition, tobogganing and snowshoeing were portrayed as "a decided attraction" and a "purely local affair." Outdoor curling, hockey, and skating were also advertised as highlights of the winter season.[37]

Civic boosterism had a profound effect on sport and leisure in early twentieth-century Canada.[38] Often important men within their respective communities, promoters usually exhibited as much interest in civic affairs as they did in their private business ventures.[39] But as civic-minded entrepreneurs began to sell leisure to consumers as entertainment, sport "became a business much like any other."[40] Small-town Banff was no exception. There, blending finance, romanticism, and leisure, Luxton's *Crag and Canyon* repeatedly presented a selective view of wintertime Banff—exaggerating those

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[35] Kain, *Where the Clouds Can Go*, 276.

[36] Norman K. Luxton was the son of *Winnipeg Free Press* co-founder William Luxton. After working for the Winnipeg newspaper, Norman Luxton joined the *Calgary Herald* for eight years. Luxton bought Banff's *Crag and Canyon* newspaper in 1902 and remained as publisher until 1951.

[37] WMCR 02.6 B221 1912 Pam. H. C. Stovel, *50 Switzerlands in One: Banff the Beautiful, Canada's National Park: Where to Go and What to See in and around Banff* (Banff: Crag and Canyon, 1912), 55-7.

[38] For an examination of how businessmen profited from Toronto's burgeoning sports industry, see Tony Joyce, "Sport and the Cash Nexus in Nineteenth Century Canada," *Sport History Review* 30, 2 (1999): 140-67.

[39] Stephen H. Hardy, "Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace," *The New American Sport History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. S.W. Pope (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 346-49; Ann Hall, Trevor Slack, Garry Smith, and David Whitson, *Sport in Canadian Society* (1991; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 66-9.

[40] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 57-8.

aspects thought to be most appealing to outsiders—that, in many ways, remains the standard stock-in-trade of Banff's modern tourism industry. Note, for example, the front-page description of winter sports from late January 1915:

> There is an ever-increasing number of tourists who hold in scorn the idea of white flannels in January, of dolce farniente [sweet doing nothing] in a porch chair, with a round, tropic moon coming up through the branches of the palms, of torrid noons and shivery evenings. They want their winter to be WINTER—with the smoke of hearth fires ascending straight into the crisp, tingling air and the clean, dry snow blanketing the earth with a sparkling carpet of white. People are coming to realize more and more the joys of open-air skating, tobogganing, ice-boating, curling, and hockey, of red cheeks and the health and warmth that comes from exercise and plenty of it in God's great outdoors.[41]

The consolidation of sport as the most commanding element in winter's growing commercial marketplace, however, was not fully achieved in Banff until the first annual winter carnival in 1917.

Winter carnivals had been a recognizable feature in many parts of Canada for a generation or more, and it was typical that outdoor-sporting events featured as main attractions.[42] The idea for a winter carnival in Banff was first conceived by Norman Luxton and Barney W. Collison, magistrate, who, in the fall of 1916, secured federal funding for the event from the head of the Dominion Parks Branch, Commissioner James B. Harkin. A similar request to the CPR's Public Relations Office brought, not surprisingly, another favourable response: during the carnival week, the railway offered to provide special train services from Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Prizes and trophies were donated by various businesses from Banff and Calgary, while Luxton himself provided sightseeing cars for tourists and handled the press publications.[43]

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[41] "Winter Sports in Banff," *Crag and Canyon* 15, 48 (23 January 1915).

[42] Frank Abbot, "Cold Cash and Ice Palaces: The Quebec Winter Carnival of 1894," *Canadian Historical Review* 69, 2 (1988): 180-81; Alan Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840-1895," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 11 (May 1978): 149; Don Morrow, "Frozen Festivals: Ceremony and the *Caraval* in the Montreal Winter Carnivals, 1883-1889," *Sport History Review* 27 (1996): 173-74. West of the Rockies, in the Columbia Mountains, for example, winter carnivals in the small mining communities of Rossland and Revelstoke, beginning around the turn of the century, drew hundreds of visiting spectators. See Chic Scott, *Powder Pioneers: Ski Stories for the Canadian Rockies and Columbia Mountains* (Vancouver: Rocky Mountain Books, 2005), 19-35.

The proposed idea was initially met with local indifference. Much to the chagrin of promoters, several private and public town meetings generated only marginal interest in the venture. But Luxton and Collison remained undeterred. After a thorough house-to-house canvas, they eventually "saw the whole town fall in with the plan."[44] Any remaining scepticism was dealt with by the local newspaper. "Engage in a heart-to-heart talk with any of the old-timers of Banff," town residents were told,

> and two outstanding facts will confront you—an abiding faith in the future of the mountain town, and the possibility of making this place a mecca for winter travel. A winter carnival, when those who have seen Banff in her summer garb could see her resplendent winter robes, has been the acme of ambition of those who have the interests of the town at heart.[45]

Three weeks later, in a front-page article titled "Ready, Aye Ready," citizens, now seemingly duty-bound, were instructed on just how Banff's "resplendent winter robes" should appear:

> Every business man or householder who owns or can borrow, beg or swipe a bit of bunting should make it a point that the Union Jack is flying during the carnival week. Nothing gives the town a more cheerful appearance, or adds to the welcome of visitors, like plenty of flags—and then more flags. If you possess a blanket coat, wear it during the carnival weeks. If you own a carnival costume, don it. But, whether you wear gala attire or otherwise, clothe your face in a smile, wear a bright, gladsome look—that will convince visitors Banff is the most desirable spot on the earth to live.[46]

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[43] Eleanor G. Luxton, *Banff: Canada's First National Park: a History and a Memory of Rocky Mountains Park* (Banff: Summerthought, 1975), 116.

[44] *The Calgary Herald* (21 January 1939): 19.

[45] "Mid-Winter Carnival Preparations," *Crag and Canyon* 17, 47 (13 January 1917).

[46] "Ready, Aye Ready," *Crag and Canyon* 17, 50 (3 February 1917).

The thirteen-day winter carnival began on 5 February, and was complete with the requisite snow queen, ice palace, and various social and athletic events.[47] The ski-jumping contest, easily the most popular event, reportedly drew over 1000 spectators to the northern slopes of Tunnel Mountain.[48] The competition itself was largely dominated by outsiders, particularly entrants representing Norwegian sports clubs from Revelstoke, British Columbia, and Camrose, Alberta, while enthusiasts from the local ski club were not allowed to compete on the basis of their young age. The middle-class veneration of amateur athletics, which emphasized doing rather than watching, was challenged, it appeared, by the new veneration of capitalist promotion. Spectatorship amounted to profit and promoters were eager to sell a good show. In Banff, their efforts paid off. The carnival was heralded in the newspaper as a grand success. "The people of Banff have demonstrated their ability to successfully promote and stage a winter carnival," the *Crag and Canyon* reported, "and the hopes, ambitions and dreams of the business men… have at last borne fruition."[49] Four years later, in 1921, the carnival's ski-jumping event was added to the North American professional circuit. Although allowed to participate, local amateurs were relegated to the Class B and C levels of competition. Class A was reserved for professionals. Women were not allowed to compete. Barely ten years old in the Canadian Rockies, skiing for most people was now a spectator's sport (see Fig. 18).[50]

But professional sport was not completely unopposed in Banff, nor was it in the rest of the country, for that matter. Across Canada, community teams, youth and intercollegiate sport, and recreational leagues continued to offer a wide variety of sporting activities during the 1920s and thirties.[51] In the Rockies, the Banff Ski Club, for example, was instrumental in setting the stage for mountain skiing. Just prior to the 1917 winter carnival, the club was formed by a group of Banff skiers, many of them the same youngsters whom Conrad Kain had impressed six years earlier, namely the brothers Clifford, Jack, and Peter White, together with Cyril Paris and Fulton Dunsmore.[52] Although the renowned trail-guide Jimmy Simpson referred to them as the "boys with wooden feet and heads to match," the club did receive some encouragement from other local adults, in particular August "Gus" Johnson, a Scandinavian-born professional ski jumper who, after competing at the 1917 carnival, made Banff his home.[53] Under Johnson's tutelage, the club's activities largely focused on the easily accessible slopes of Mount Norquay, a few kilometers northeast of the townsite.[54]

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[47] WMCR Info file: Banff Winter Carnival 1917. Accn. 594. *Programme: The First Annual Carnival*, (Banff: Crag and Canyon Print, 1917).

[48] "Successful Winter Carnival brought to an end," *Crag and Canyon* 17, 52 (17 February 1917).

[49] Ibid.

[50] Yeo, "Making Banff a Year-Round Park," 90.

Throughout the early 1920s, making turns down a slope or "ski running," as it was called, steadily grew in popularity at Mt. Norquay. Aiding this development, of course, was the introduction of new techniques and equipment, such as the stem-turn, shorter skis, and climbing skins, then all common in Europe. Another significant boost,

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[51] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers,* 103; Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 146-83.

[52] Cyril Paris, interview by Elizabeth Rummel, Apr. 29, 1970, interview S1/50 1750, audio recording, WMCR, Banff, AB. The club was given a great boost in 1918, when local merchant Dave White, who was the father of the Cliff, Jack, and Peter White, brought in skis from the Northland Ski Company of Minneapolis. WMCR, M68 2, "Early Skiing in Banff -- recalled by Cyril Paris," unpublished manuscript, Banff, 1965.

[53] WMCR M159, Cliff J. White Collection, "The Human History of Skiing at Lake Louise," speech, 8 February 1992.

[54] Peter White, Dunsmore, and Paris discovered the terrain in 1920, when they skied over Norquay Pass across to Mount Edith, likely becoming the first skiers to make recreational use of the area. A forest fire had conveniently cleared much of the brush cover, and numerous slash trails—made by summer logging operations—had left long swaths open that made for excellent downhill ski runs. See Rolf Lund, "Recreational Skiing in the Canadian Rockies," *Alberta History* 26, 2 (Spring 1978): 30.

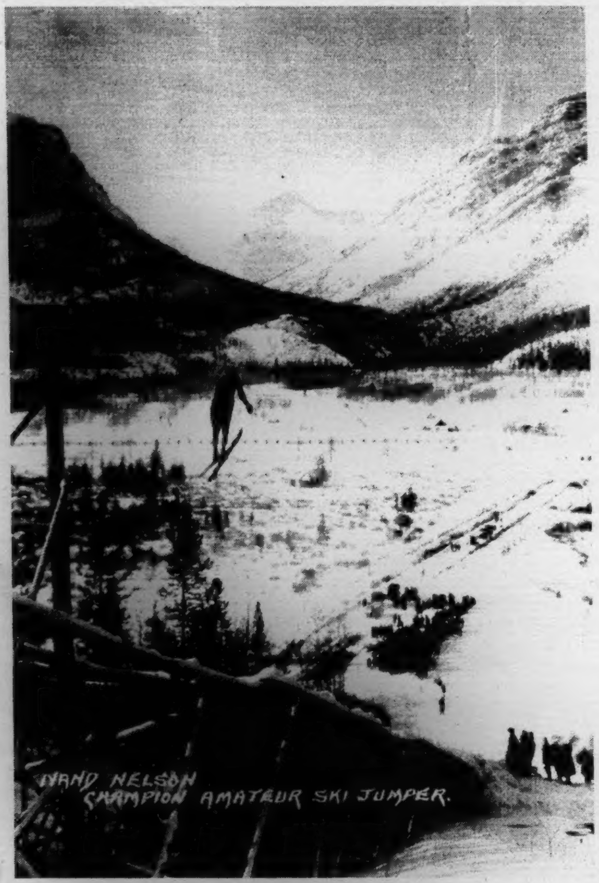

Fig. 18 Byron Harmon. Ski Jump Competition on Tunnel Mountain, Banff Winter Carnival. Photograph, ca. 1920s. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V 263 – NA71 – 3980.

typical of the decade, came in the form of American investment.[55] Upon visiting Banff in 1923, Owen Bryant, a Boston entomologist and ski enthusiast, made a financial contribution of 500 dollars to the Banff Ski Club to help further develop the area after befriending several of the young members.[56] Defined ski runs were cleared of timber in early 1924, and permanent small ski jumps were constructed the following season. Development culminated in 1928, when, under the newly-incorporated "Mount Norquay Ski Co. Ltd.," Cliff White, Jack White, and Cyril Paris secured permission from park officials to build Mt. Norquay's first ski lodge (see Fig. 19). From the outset, they vowed that "the venture would not become commercialized."[57] Their assurance had little chance against the wide-spread hedonism of the period. Influenced by "some prominent Calgary men," the Mount Norquay Ski Camp officially opened for business in 1929, by which time downhill skiing in the front country had fully come into its own.[58]

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[55] American investment doubled in Canada during the 1920s. See John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 342-43; William L. Marr and Donald G. Patterson, *Canada: An Economic History* (Toronto: Gage, 1980), 290-97, 355-74.

The growing popularity of skiing encouraged the development of backcountry ski lodges, the first of which was built near Mt. Assiniboine by Strom and Albizzi in 1928 (see Fig. 20). Despite the incredulous Banffites, Strom and Albizzi's group of "dudes" enjoyed a successful, albeit challenging, spring trip to the region. "We had seventeen days of sunshine in a row and the most beautiful skiing any of us had ever seen," Strom recalled, "a whole world for ourselves, mountains all around us with runs dropping two thousand vertical feet, and an endless variety of touring."[59] They found the area surrounding Mt. Assiniboine to have all the necessary qualities for a commercial operation, although it was far too remote ever to attract large crowds. The seeming

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[56] WMCR M36 28, Catherine Robb Whyte Collection, notes by Catharine Whyte from conversations with Peter Whyte and others.

[57] W.E. Round, "Mount Norquay Ski Camp," *Canadian Ski Annual* (1928-29): 76; Lund, "Recreational Skiing in the Canadian Rockies": 31.

[58] Rodney Touche, *Brown Cows, Sacred Cows: A True Story of Lake Louise* (Hanna, AB: Gorman, 1990), 15; Lund, "Recreational Skiing in the Canadian Rockies": 31.

[59] Strom, *Pioneers on Skis*, 126.

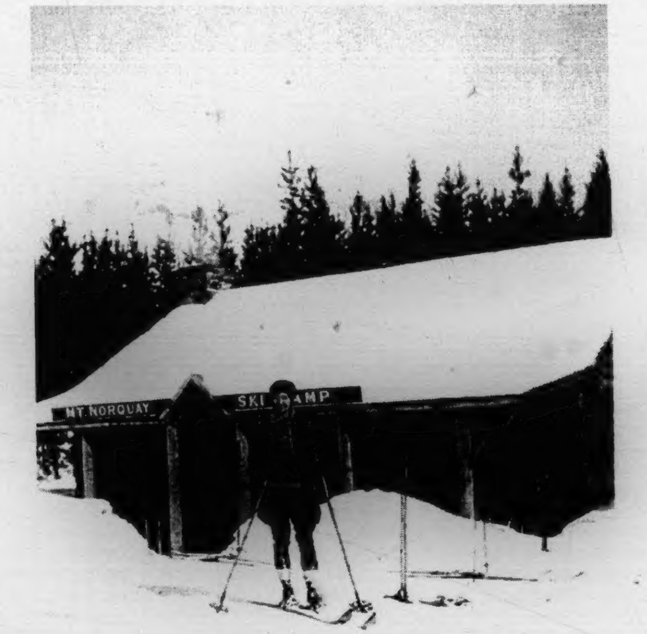

Fig. 19 George Paris. Skier at Mount Norquay Ski Camp. Photograph, 1928. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, NA29 – 781.

inaccessibility of the area appealed to the business partners. "Best of all," Strom later admitted, "was the lack of neighbors [*sic*]. The nearest ones were in Banff, thirty-four miles away. From the conversation with the old-timer it was a safe bet that no one would come and disturb us…. No better place for promoting a venture of this sort existed in America at that time."[60] To the disapproving locals in Banff, Strom paid little attention, but recognized their bias: "Without a Scandinavian accent and a name ending in "sen" one had no business on a ski hill," Strom later explained. "For utility the Indian

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[60] Ibid., 126; E.J. Hart *The Battle for Banff: Exploring the Heritage of the Banff-Bow Valley: Part II, 1930 to 1985* (Banff: EJH Literary Enterprises, 2003), 36-37.

Fig. 20 Lloyd Harmon. At Assiniboine Lodge. Photograph, ca. 1930s. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, V 108-972.

snowshoe was the thing, and even to this day one can get into arguments about the practicalities of skiing as compared with snowshoeing."[61] In its exclusivity, the untracked snow of the remote winter backcountry was a luxury that skiers elsewhere eagerly sought. Thus, given their connections at the Lake Placid Club, Strom and Albizzi believed their new venture would profit. Their clientele—both men and women, and usually American—were largely drawn from the eastern urban elite. In the Canadian west, while opportunities for participation had grown slightly, skiing in the backcountry continued to hold little popular appeal.

Ski Mountaineering and the Alpine Club of Canada, 1930-1939

Mountain skiing went largely unmentioned in the *CAJ* until 1930, the same year that the editorship changed hands for the first time in the club's twenty-four-year history.

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[61] Strom, *Pioneers on Skis*, 116.

The heady "golden age" of mountaineering in Canada had, by this time, long sputtered to its inevitable end. With the range seemingly exhausted of first ascents, international climbing in the Rockies sharply declined as older climbers ventured farther afield in search of impressive-sounding ascents. Club members were not unaware of such trends. By the mid-twenties, the ACC's executive, in partnership with the American Alpine Club and the Alpine Club (England), had turned its sights north to the Yukon's Saint Elias Range and the unclimbed challenge of Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak.[62] By the end of the decade, however, the financial demands of a distant, large-scale expedition were far too great for the club to bear.[63] The onset of the Great Depression and the consequent termination of the club's federal funding in 1931 further prevented the ACC from attempting any grand-scale "conquests."[64] The state of affairs, lamented the seventy-year-old Arthur O. Wheeler, honorary ACC president and co-founder, thoroughly undermined the club's "leadership among Canadian mountain climbing organizations" and their "position as such among the big alpine clubs of the world."[65] Unable to uphold their reputation among the prestigious ranks of the international climbing fraternity, the club restricted itself, begrudgingly, to the seemingly exhausted

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[62] See Robinson and Reichwein, "Canada's Everest?": 95-121. It is interesting to note, though it is hardly surprising, that the 1925 Mt. Logan expedition employed the use of snowshoes rather than skis.

[63] At the Annual Meeting in 1930, the ACC's executive passed a resolution authorizing an expedition similar to the 1925 Mt. Logan initiative. Wheeler framed it in a similar way: "In 1925 we had the Mt. Logan Expedition; you all know about this; but my point is since then we have done nothing but hold these camps, and I think therefore it is time that we should do something again." Any ideas, however, were dashed the following year: "…the Executive Committee has found that it was inadvisable to conduct an Expedition in 1931, chiefly for financial reasons." Arthur O. Wheeler, "Honorary President's Address," *CAJ* 19 (1930): 178; H.E. Sampson, "President's Address," *CAJ* 20 (1931): 182.

[64] Beginning in 1906, the ACC was in receipt yearly of a grant of $1000 dollars from the Department of the Interior. Historian PearlAnn Reichwein suggests that the 1931 cutback may have been reaction to the club's political activism, specifically its opposition to earlier hydro-development plans in the Rockies. See Reichwein, "'Hands Off Our National Parks'": 154-55.

[65] A. O. Wheeler, "Honorary President's Address," *CAJ* 20 (1931): 186.

Rockies. Wheeler bemoaned the situation publicly: "With regard to original mountain climbing," he told members assembled at the ACC's twenty-sixth Annual Meeting, held at the Prospector's Valley Camp,

> the Canadian Rockies are beginning to enter into the condition of the European Alps, where first ascents can only be made by new routes. It is not quite so bad yet for there are many peaks unclimbed which will furnish good climbs, but they are not popular because they are not outstanding and have as yet no names.[66]

It should not be too surprising, then, that subtle changes in mountaineering began to receive acknowledgement during this period, at first cautiously, in the tradition-bound pages of the *CAJ*. For example, the leading article in the 1920 volume, titled "Amateur Climbing," stated that, while "the services of an experienced guide are absolutely necessary at the beginning of any climber's career," an amateur climber, after a long apprenticeship, may wish to climb without the assistance of a professional mountain guide. "Such a desire," the journal asserted, "is in the highest degree commendable and should be encouraged rather than repressed."[67] While never before endorsed by the club, the philosophy of guideless climbing was not really that new; it actually originated in Europe, some forty years earlier.[68] More importantly, it extended the ideals of amateurism for the journal's readership during a period when sport in Canada was becoming increasingly detached from its lofty goals of "rational recreation."[69] Quoting

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[66] Ibid.: 185.

[67] W.E. Stone, "Amateur Climbing," *CAJ* 11 (1920): 2.

[68] Albert Frederick Mummery was one of the earliest advocates of guideless climbing in the Alps. Rivaled in success only by Edward Whymper's famous *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* (1886), Mummery's book, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* (1895), widely popularized his philosophy on amateur mountaineering.

[69] Rational recreation was the ideal that nineteenth- and twentieth-century, middle-class reformers imposed on the urban working class of their day. Recreation was viewed as "rational" only when it fostered self-improvement and self-enrichment, and, as a result, enhanced self-expression and personal and social identity.

Fred Mummery, one of England's finest amateur climbers during the 1880s and nineties, the article concluded that, for the unguided amateur, "there is educative and purifying power in danger that is to be found in no other school," and "equally, whether he succeeds or fails, he delights in the fun and jollity of the struggle."[70] Nevertheless, while Victorian attitudes towards the sport retained the support by the club's executive, departures from them became more and more apparent in the journal throughout the twenties. Narratives describing new ascents, such as the first women's ascent or of new routes up previously "bagged" peaks, were increasingly represented in the journal's principal "Mountaineering Section," though they usually followed the seemingly more important articles recording first ascents of unclimbed peaks.

Disregarding the conventions affirmed by the journal, some club members, particularly a small cohort from the distant Winnipeg Section, showed a keen interest in mountain skiing. Manitobans, in fact, had made ski-touring trips to the Rocky and Columbia Mountains in 1911, 1914, 1922, and frequently thereafter, but, until 1930, acknowledgment of such activities did not appear in the journal.[71] The early trips were initiated under the leadership of Alexander A. McCoubrey, a draughtsman employed by the Winnipeg offices of the CPR, who joined the newly-formed ACC in 1908.[72] McCoubrey long remembered "the jeers that greeted the announcement that he intended taking out a small party to ski in the Rockies" in 1911.[73] The success of the "experiment" warranted another trip three years later, this time to Rogers Pass in the Columbia Mountains, where his group—comprised of men and women—travelled up onto the Asulkan Glacier, and, later, to Balu Pass via Cougar Brook.[74] The First World War temporarily interrupted the winter activities of the Winnipeg Section, but a few days spent on skis in the Lake Louise area, during the winter of 1921, further convinced McCoubrey that

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[70] Stone, "Amateur Climbing": 6.

[71] By the 1930s, as one "Winnipegger" proudly boasted, "ski mountaineering had become the ACC Winnipeg Section's special game." Everett J. Fee, "Manitobans in the Mountains—Fifty Years of Ski Mountaineering," *CAJ* 66 (1983): 19.

[72] Spanning thirty-four years, McCoubrey's contributions to the ACC were impressive. In addition to being the Winnipeg Section Chairman of the ACC for nearly fourteen years (1926-1940), McCoubrey was the vice-president of the club (1928), the president of the club (1932-1934), the editor of the *CAJ* (1930-1942), and the chairman of the club's glacier- and ski-mountaineering committee for numerous years.

> the members of the Club were overlooking a fascinating means of seeing the mountains under conditions that were equally as enjoyable, if not more so, than summer conditions. The way of the pioneer however, like that of the transgressor, is a thorny one. It has remained for the great growth of the sport elsewhere, to focus on the ski playground that awaits us at our backdoor.[75]

It did not remain overlooked much longer. On becoming editor of the *CAJ*, a post held solely by Arthur O. Wheeler until 1930, McCoubrey attempted to make up for lost time and bring the club into the fold. Under his direction, the 1930 *CAJ* contained four feature-length articles on ski mountaineering: "Ski-Climbs in the Coast Range," by Don Munday; "A Ski Expedition to the Columbia Ice Fields," by Russell Bennett; "The Trip from Brazeau Cabin to the Columbia Ice Fields," by Alf Lindley; and "On Ski into the Tonquin," by Cyril Wates.[76] In addition, the journal's book review section drew attention to the European scene, where skiing had long replaced conventional mountaineering as the premier alpine sport.[77] Among the publications praised were Arnold Lunn's *The Complete Ski-runner*, Marquis Albizzi's *Short Advice on Ski-ing*, Col. Georg Bilgeri's *Handbook on Mountain Ski-ing*, as well as *The British Ski Year Book of the Ski Club of Great Britain and the Alpine Ski Club.*[78]

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[73] A.A. McCoubrey, "Ski-ing in the Canadian Cordillera," *CAJ* 19 (1931): 161.

[74] See Murray Toft, *Touring at Rogers Pass: A Marked Route Map for Skiers and Climbers with Accompanying Photos* (Calgary: Druid Mountain Enterprises, 1997).

[75] McCoubrey, "Ski-ing in the Canadian Cordillera": 161.

[76] Don Munday, "Ski-Climbs in the Coast Range," *CAJ* 19 (1931): 101-11; Russell H. Bennett, "A Ski Expedition to the Columbia Ice Fields," *CAJ* 19 (1931): 112-16; A.D. Lindley, "The Trip from Brazeau Cabin to the Columbia Ice Fields," *CAJ* 19 (1931): 117-20; Cyril G. Wates, "On Ski into the Tonquin," *CAJ* 19 (1931): 124-29.

Although progressive in his advocacy for mountain skiing, McCoubrey, like the older, middle-class patriarchs of the ACC, strongly defended amateurism as the basis for the sport's morality and governance. For instance, if the distinction between mountain skiing and ski jumping remained somewhat elusive to the reader, McCoubrey's own two-page article, titled "Ski-ing in the Canadian Cordillera," clearly hinted at what mountain skiing was *not*. "The tremendous growth of the sport of ski-ing in Europe and its application to summer and winter mountaineering," he wrote, must be understood as

> …apart, of course, from that branch—ski jumping—which has been heretofore in the public eye due mainly to the development of artificial "hills," love of the spectacular, worship of "records" and above all, the fact that the majority of the exponents of the art of ski-ing on this side of the Atlantic have been of Scandinavian origin. In Europe, it was only when the sport developed beyond the borders of Scandinavia, that its usefulness to mountaineers became apparent and the rapid development in technique of the past twenty years is largely due to its introduction into Central Europe.[79]

Exclusionary rules, hierarchies of difference, and distinctive ideologies invoked to promote cultural and national distinction were presented to the journal's readership, distinguishing the club's activities from other—seemingly less respectable—forms of sporting culture. Club members, in fact, were engaged in "record" making practices of their own, which were rationalized through rigid codes of amateurism and legitimated by class peers. No attention, of course, was paid to this obvious contradiction. By forcefully negating the Scandinavian influence in mountain skiing, and by situating the sport exclusively within the European Alps, the cradle of Anglo-Saxon mountaineering, McCoubrey was engaging in that most popular Victorian activity of the late nineteenth century, the invention of tradition. Continuity with a suitably tailored past was forged and club practice was legitimated.[80]

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[77] Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 140.

[78] *CAJ* 19 (1931): 167-71.

[79] McCoubrey, "Ski-ing in the Canadian Cordillera": 161.

From 1907 to 1930, the *CAJ* retained the format of its first issue. No doubt due to McCoubrey's editorship, the newly revised format of the 1931 *CAJ* acknowledged and popularized the growing sport with the addition of a separate section under the title "Ski Section," which became a standard feature of subsequent volumes. Signalling a radical departure from earlier forms of climbing enshrined in the journal, the new section's leading article, titled "Ski-Mountaineering," explained to readers that "mountaineers may… be divided into three classes, those who climb only in the summer, those who prefer the winter which affords the additional thrill of ski-ing on the downhill portions, and those who like both."[81] Firmly placing skiing within the wider discourses of Anglo-Saxon mountaineering, the article continued to state that high mountain skiing "can afford great thrills in the department of exploration," particularly because "no man had ever been there on ski before."[82] In a swift and sudden stroke, the snow-clad Rockies were reinvented, again ripe for first ascents—winter ascents, in this case. Skiing had fully arrived within the ambit of unquestionable legitimation.

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[80] Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions," 263-309; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 115-20.

[81] d'Egville, "Ski-Mountaineering": 96.

[82] Ibid.: 98.

As a result, the vast glaciated terrain of the Continental Divide received new attention by mountaineers during the winter months of the early 1930s and thereafter (see Fig. 21). The latest topographical information of the period, issued by the Department of the Interior, was made available to ACC members through their journal, highlighting the vast, unbroken chain of icefields that stretched along the Divide's crest.[83] One early ski enthusiast, Russell Bennett, recalled being "forcefully struck," while looking over the maps of the Alberta and British Columbia Boundary Survey, by "the eminent, if not spectacular, suitability of certain portions of the Columbia ice-fields as ski-ing ground...."[84] Also adding to the appeal was the expansion of transportation networks, in particular the construction of the Banff-Jasper Highway, which, officially completed in 1940, paralleled the eastern slopes of the Divide, extending 250 km northwards from Lake Louise to the upper reaches of the Athabasca River Valley and the town of Jasper. For McCoubrey and the ACC, however, the most important factor in the development of mountain skiing was "the necessity of numerous, well placed cabins," a system of alpine huts not unlike that found throughout the European Alps.[85]

The growing affinity between backcountry skiing and the marketplace, therefore,

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[83] In addition to the "Ski Section," another new section, titled "New Maps," appeared in the back matter of McCoubrey's 1931 journal. See "New Maps," *CAJ* 20 (1932): 169. International commentators took notice, as well. In the 1932 volume of the *American Alpine Journal*, for instance, J. Monroe Thorington, a noted authority on North American mountaineering matters, even suggested the distinct possibility of a new line of travel—"a high-level glacier route," he called it—that would link the major icefields of the Rockies between Jasper and Lake Louise. Thorington, unlike his Canadian counterparts, however, makes no mention of skis. The route was suggested as a summer initiative. See J. Monroe Thorington, "A High-Level Glacier Route from Jasper to Lake Louise," *AAJ* 1, 4 (1932): 529-33. Nevertheless, the route was first completed by four Canadians on skis, during their centennial year. They called the high-level route the Great Divide Traverse. See Chic Scott, "The Great Canadian High Level Ski Tours," *CAJ* (1978): 2-4; "High Level Ski Tours," *Polar Circus* 1 (1986): 15-7; "Skiing the Spine of the Continent," *Mountain* 2, 3 (Winter 1999/2000): 22-9; *Summits and Icefields: Canadian Rockies: Alpine Ski Tours* (Vancouver: Rocky Mountain Books, 2003), 190-210; and *Powder Pioneers*, 134-52.

[84] Russell H. Bennett, "The Ski Ascent of Snow Dome," *CAJ* 20 (1931): 107.

[85] McCoubrey, "Ski-ing in the Canadian Cordillera": 162.

Fig. 21 Joe Weiss. Cliff White on Snow Dome, Columbia Icefield. Mount Brice is in the distant background. Photograph, March 1932. Courtesy of the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives, 994.56.651.

provoked little resistance from the amateur organizers of the ACC. Despite the onset of the Depression, commercial activities within the newly re-named Banff National Park had grown to include two additional backcountry ski lodges during the early thirties: one in the Skoki Valley, northeast of Lake Louise, in 1931; and another at Sunshine, just west of Banff's townsite, in 1934.[86] Like their precursor near Mt. Assiniboine, the new lodges provided ski enthusiasts with not only warmth and security during long winter nights, but a base from which to access easily prime, backcountry ski terrain. McCoubrey, himself, writing in the 1930 *CAJ*, publicly recommended that the club follow the lead of private entrepreneurs and consider the possibility of placing cabins where they may be of service to mountaineers during the winter months. "Private enterprise has, in one happy instance," McCoubrey wrote,

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[86] Under the newly instated National Parks Act of 1930, federal officials changed the name of Rocky Mountains Park to Banff National Park, formalized Banff's boundary changes, and enshrined the principle of inviolability in federal legislation. See C. J. Taylor, "Legislating Nature: The National Parks Act of 1930," *To See Ourselves/Two Save Ourselves: Ecology and Culture in Canada*, eds. Rowland Lorimer, Michael M'Gonigle, Jean-Pierre Revéret, and Sally Ross (Montreal: Association for Canadian Studies, 1991), 131-32.

> initiated a cabin for purely ski-ing purposes. This is the cabin in Skoki Valley, north of Lake Louise, built be Messrs White and Parrish [*sic*] of Banff. The importance and convenience of such cabin, provided that the rates are kept within the reach of members, cannot be overestimated and the erection of similar cabins will do much to place alpine ski-ing in Canada on a sound base.[87]

Although the ACC had constructed its first climbing hut in 1927, it actively expanded its hut system during the 1930s to include several cabins that would specifically benefit both climbers and skiers.[88] With the growth of hut-based winter recreation, it was only a matter of time before the idea of a winter club camp materialized.[89]

The first official ACC ski camp was held in early April, 1937, at the club's Elizabeth Parker Hut, which, located in the Lake O'Hara area, was approximately eight km southwest of Lake Louise, relatively close to CPR line, and offered access to ski terrain well suited for novice ski runners. Servicing mountaineers for nearly twelve years during the summer months, the hut, which was acquired by the club from the CPR in 1931, had increasingly become a destination for skiers throughout the 1930s.[90] Both men and women—fifteen club members in all—attended the inaugural camp, and a "very jolly time" purportedly ensued. Beginners practiced making turns on the convenient, low-angle slopes 100 metres from the hut, while the more advanced skiers enjoyed the runs below McArthur Pass and on the so-called "nursery slopes" of Mount Schaffer. Of the camp, McCoubrey voiced his endorsement publicly and looked to the future:

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[87] McCoubrey, "Ski-ing in the Canadian Cordillera": 162.

[88] For a general overview of the history of alpine huts in the Canadian Rocky and Columbia Mountains, see Herb and Pat Kariel, *Alpine Huts in the Rockies, Selkirks, and Purcells* (Banff: The Alpine Club of Canada, 1986).

[89] The idea for an official ACC ski camp was first suggested at the club's 1935 Annual Meeting, held at the Mount Assiniboine Camp. One year later, at the Fryatt Creek Camp, in Jasper National Park, a resolution was unanimously passed among the club's executive that a ski camp be organized for the following spring. See A.A. McCoubrey, "The Ski Camp at Lake O'Hara," *CAJ* 24 (1937): 82; *The ACC Gazette* 28 (Oct. 1936): 13.

[90] Funds to upgrade and furnish the cabin were provided by the club's Winnipeg Section, aided by a loan from the ACC's new "Club Hut Fund." See Edna H. Greer, "The Elizabeth Parker Cabin—Lake O'Hara," *CAJ* 20 (1932): 159-61. The inaugural ACC Ski Camp began on April 4, a date that, according to McCoubrey, "was a little later than that desired but as Calgary members had used this cabin for ski-ing for a number of years during the Easter weekend, the committee arranged the camp date to give this section possession of the cabin during the Easter holidays." See McCoubrey, "The Ski Camp at Lake O'Hara": 82.

> The camp proved beyond all doubt that there will not be the slightest difficulty in the future in filling to capacity any ski camp arranged under the auspices of the Club. Next spring it is proposed to hold the ski camp in the Little Yoho if sufficient funds can be raised build a cabin there this fall. A cabin near the head of the valley could be reached in one long day from Field, and would provide a splendid rendezvous for both summer and winter climbing.[91]

Clearly, by the mid-to-late thirties, ski mountaineering was fully enshrined within club culture. In the journal, the ski-mountaineering section continued, without break, in the successive issues that followed the 1931 volume. Writing in 1937, McCoubrey confidently insisted that the section would "undoubtedly grow larger from year to year as new summer ascents diminish and new winter ascents on ski increase."[92] The club had no reason to believe otherwise, particularly after the success of the Lake O'Hara ski camp.

That conviction was suddenly challenged. The winter of 1937-38 was a bad year for avalanches in the Canadian Rockies. With growing numbers of skiers enjoying the winter playground found in the mountain backcountry, it was only a matter of time before avalanches received increased public attention. On New Year's Eve, December 31, 1937, the front page of Banff's *Crag and Canyon* newspaper headlined "Skiers Make Ascent of

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[91] Ibid.: 85. The idea for a cabin to be built in the Little Yoho Valley was fully realized in 1939 with the construction of the Stanley Mitchell Hut. See C. G. Wates, "The Stanley Mitchell Hut," *CAJ* 27 (1939): 73-5.

[92] McCoubrey, "The Ski Camp at Lake O'Hara": 81.

Mount Fay—Report Enjoyable Sport."[93] Two of the finest amateur climbers in the Rockies, Capt. Rex Gibson and his young protégé Bob Hind, both from Edmonton, along with Douglas Crosby, of Banff, had made the successful ski ascent of Mount Fay from the Elizabeth Parker Hut.[94] Tragically, the same day the headlines were printed, Gibson and Hind, this time in the company of John Bulyea, also of Edmonton, were caught in a large avalanche while skiing on the slopes of Mt. Schaffer. The *Crag and Canyon* reported the incident in its next issue:

> On Friday, Gibson, Hind and Bulyea were skiing on a slope below Mount Schaffer. They were zig-zagging up the slope, when suddenly they heard a crack above them and realized an avalanche was descending. At this time, Gibson was the higher up of the three to the right of center. Bulyea was in the center a bit lower down the mountain, with Hind over to the left of the avalanche track. Warnings were shouted, Gibson making it to the right, Hind to the left, but Bulyea being in the center caught the full force of the big avalanche. Gibson got clear but Hind was caught in the outer edge and, as he had been seen by Gibson, the latter immediately went to his rescue and within a few minutes had extricated him from the slide. The two men then set desperately to work searching and probing for their companion, but after three hours gave up the search and started for Field to raise the alarm.[95]

The slide's runout, according to the Banff newspaper, was 120-metres wide (see Fig. 22). The deposited debris, a jumble of snow, shale, earth, and boulders, was estimated to be ten-metres deep. Bulyea was fully buried, undetectable in the days before sophisticated avalanche transceivers. His lifeless body was not discovered until the spring.[96]

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[93] "Skiers Make Ascent of Mount Fay—Report Enjoyable Snow," *Crag and Canyon* 37, 53 (31 Dec. 1937): 1.

[94] Rex Gibson was a participant at the ACC's Ski Camp at Lake O'Hara earlier that spring. He led the first ski ascent of Mt. Schaffer. See McCoubrey, "The Ski Camp at Lake O'Hara": 83.

[95] "John Bulyea, of Edmonton, Loses Life in Avalanche," *Crag and Canyon* 38, 1 (7 January 1938): 3.

[96] John Bulyea was a well-known skier in Edmonton. He was a twenty-year-old medical student at the University of Alberta, where his father, Dr. H. E. Bulyea, was the director of the School of Dentistry and professor of operative dentistry. "Death of Student Saddens Varsity," *Edmonton Journal* (4 Jan. 1938): 9.

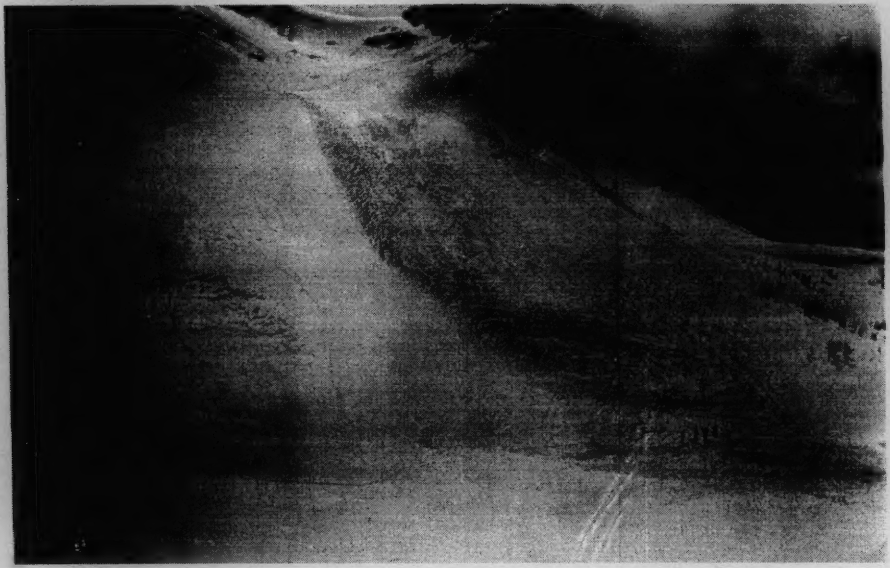

Fig. 22 Bob Hind. Searching through avalanche debree for John Bulyea on the "nursery slopes" of Mount Schaffer. Photograph, January 1938. Courtesy of Pete Hind.

The avalanche accident received wide-spread attention in the Canadian press, including front-page coverage from the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Edmonton Bulletin*, the *Calgary Daily Herald*, and the *Winnipeg Free Press*. It was even reported in the *Montreal Gazette*.[97] The articles varied little from press to press. For the most part, they described the events that led up to the incident, as well as the ensuing search efforts, based on various accounts from park officials and those individuals involved. Mild weather was the alleged culprit, and no blame was attributed to the skiers. Some reports even hinted that the ACC was partially responsible. The *Crag and Canyon*, for instance, reminded readers that "in the 1936 issue of the Alpine Journal [*CAJ*], a picture of the slope on which the avalanche which caught Bulyea is shown. In the published picture, the slope is criss-crossed with ski trails and is described as being a 'nursery slope.'"[98] Pointedly the report then came to an end.

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[97] "City Skier Killed in Mountain Avalanche," *Edmonton Journal* (3 Jan. 1938): 1-2; "John H. Bulyea is Swept to Death in Roaring Avalanche," *Edmonton Bulletin* 108, 1 (3 Jan. 1938): 1-2; "Tragic Ski-ing Expedition: Abandon Search for Youth Lost in O'Hara Snowslide," *The Calgary Daily Herald* (3 Jan. 1938): 1-2; "Skier is Buried Alive in Rocky Mountain Avalanche: Young Edmonton Student is Victim; Companion Saved by Third Member," *Winnipeg Free Press* (3 Jan. 1938): 1; "Avalanche Kills Skier," *Montreal Gazette* 167, 2 (3 Jan. 1938): 2.

The impact of the criticism is difficult to measure: no official statement addressing the incident was ever issued by the club. To be fair, McCoubrey's article *did* warn that the slopes of Mt. Schaffer were, in years of normal snowfall, "subject to avalanche early in the season."[99] Nevertheless, distancing the ACC from any accountability, the club's reaction was clearly one of careful avoidance. For example, there is not one single reference to the accident in the pages of the 1937 *CAJ* (published in 1938), while, conversely, Gibson and Hind's winter ascent of Mt. Fay received ample representation.[100] An obituary for Bulyea did not appear in the journal, and McCoubrey's proposed 1938 ACC ski camp, to be held only months later, was cancelled without explanation. Moreover, the entire ski-mountaineering section, contrary to the editor's earlier prediction, disappeared from the journal in the issues following the 1937 volume. Whatever conclusions may be drawn from the club's treatment of the Mt. Schaffer avalanche, the quiet erasure of the incident demonstrates the journal's intentional hand in calculatedly shaping not just a suitable past, but a selective version of the present, as well.

Unquestionably, the Schaffer incident was a setback for backcountry skiing and the ACC. Not long after, however, public criticism faded. By the spring of 1939, the whole event seemed forgotten. Club organizers held a second ski camp, this time at the ACC's Memorial Cabin (an early precursor to the Wates-Gibson-Memorial Hut) in the Tonquin Valley, near Jasper, and McCoubrey's plans to build a cabin in the Little Yoho

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[98] "John Bulyea, of Edmonton, Loses Life in Avalanche," *Crag and Canyon* 38, 1 (7 Jan. 1938): 3.

[99] McCoubrey, "The Ski Camp at Lake O'Hara": 83.

[100] "First Winter Ascent of Mt. Fay," *CAJ* 25 (1938): 105-06.

Valley were renewed. Construction on the Stanley Mitchell Hut, as they called it, was completed in autumn, and it welcomed its first guests and the third ACC ski camp the following spring.[101]

Downhill skiing in the Canadian Rockies would later increasingly undergo extensive mass commercialization to make the range a world-class "destination." Skiing in the untracked backcountry, however, remained the primary source of income for only a handful of very small-scale, dedicated commercial operators and their guides, excluding the more-recent developments in the heli-ski industry that began in the 1960s and seventies.

Off the Beaten Path?

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the technical level of expertise achieved by climbers in Canada was, arguably, still comparable to when Conrad Kain, at the apex of his career, led the first ascent of Bugaboo Spire in 1916.[102] Elsewhere, climbing had rapidly evolved as new attitudes and techniques—especially the use of pitons and carabineers—were applied to the sheer walls of the Dolomites and on the icy north faces of the western Alps, such as those adorning the Matterhorn (first climbed in 1931), the Grandes Jorasses (1935), and the infamous Eiger (1939); here were steep, soaring alpine walls, thousands of metres high from bergschrund to summit, whose rocks were verglassed because they saw so little sun. Throughout most Alpine nations, the cult of the *nordwand* was avidly adopted and espoused by all who considered themselves avant-garde, mostly a wave of unemployed youth who had been displaced by the economic chaos of the reconstruction era. Still, few climbers then active in Canada showed any great interest.

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[101] See Scott, *Powder Pioneers*, 82-90.

[102] A.H. MacCarthy, "The Howser and Bugaboo Spires, Purcell Range," *CAJ* 8 (1917): 17; Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 107.

There can be no question that behind the ACC's activities in the 1920s and thirties lay an essential conservatism, despite the seemingly innovative departures that gained increased representational status in the club's journal. The explanation for this attitude lies in the composition of the 1920 *CAJ*. Of the contributors, the youngest was aged forty-two; most were men in their fifties and sixties, and all had membership cards issued well before the First World War.[103] Theirs was a distinctly amateur, middle-class recreation, generated, constrained, and structured within a particular pattern of institutionalization developed by Britons in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.[104] Their uncompromising outlook was moulded by the literature they read and wrote, and their holidays in the mountains rejuvenated their shaky but lingering confidence in Victorian notions of progress and superiority. The fact that mountain skiing was so unworthy of comment only until it was thoroughly cast within the recognizable principles and practices of *their* sport illustrates the club struggling with the weight of its own tradition during the interwar period in Canada. To be sure, backcountry skiing reinvigorated the ACC and offered a wider range of recreational pursuits to club members in the 1930s and thereafter, but its adoption by mountaineers should not really be seen as particularly innovative in the wider sense of mountaineering as sport. It was an obvious extension of an older form of mountaineering as exploration, awkwardly modified by a frustrated generation of mountaineers who, by their own standards, had little left to do in the range.

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[103] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 43-4.

[104] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class": 586-87.

By the 1930s, the broad outlines of geographic knowledge had long been established in the Canadian Rockies: the range was thoroughly mapped, highway construction continued unabated, and the longstanding mysteries and objectives of Victorian curiosity seemed satisfied. The era of the packtrain had, almost, come to an end. But the area of the Rockies designated as national parks was vast, encompassing more than 1,200-squared kilometres, similar in size to nearly half of Switzerland. Whereas Switzerland is currently home to approximately 7,500,000 people, the parks in the Rockies have only about 15,000. The population was closer to 2,500 in the 1930s.[105] Any feeling of remoteness was likely further punctuated in the winter months. In the minds of climbers, the cold recesses of the Rockies became viewed as utterly "unexplored," and mountaineering on skis, then, conveniently continued apace with the same sense of novelty that Victorian climbers of an earlier generation desperately sought. Perhaps Georg Von Lillienfeld, a visiting British mountaineer, best summed it up, when, after a 1936 ski trip to the Wapta Icefields, he asserted that

> the characteristic difference that strikes the European visitor almost on his first day in the Canadian Rockies, and impresses itself more and more profoundly upon his mind during a longer stay, may be seen correctly in the tremendous vastness and still unspoiled wilderness of these rugged ranges and trailless [*sic*] valleys and the complete solitude of the "high country" and the big icefields. Although detailed maps, with ski routes, major crevasse and avalanche gullies marked on them, an elaborately set up hut system, human settlements in every little valley have done a great deal to lessen the dangers of skiing and ski-mountaineering in the Alps, they also have taken away a good part of the fun that lies for the experienced mountaineer in being dependant only on his own ability and in pioneering excursions off the beaten path.[106]

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[105] Touche, *Brown Cows, Sacred Cows*, 16.

[106] Georg Von Lillienfeld, "A Spring Ski Excursion into the Bow Lake District," *CAJ* 24 (1936): 75.

CHAPTER FIVE

"How Steep is Steep?" The Struggle for Mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies, 1948-1961

No one group could ever make sport simply an extension of its will, however reasonable its vision might be.[1]

Colin D. Howell

Sport and leisure practices, like all aspects of popular culture, have emerged in their present forms through the struggles, negotiations, and compromises of various interest groups, processes that are ongoing to this day.[2] French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu noted this phenomenon in the analysis of sport as a cultural form, when he wrote that

> …sport, like any other practice, is the object of struggles between the fractions of the dominant class and also between the social classes…*the social definition of sport* is an object of struggles…the field of sporting practice is the site of struggles in which what is at stake, *inter alia*, is the monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice and of the legitimate function of sporting activity.[3]

In this context, mountaineering as sport makes for an intriguing case study, particularly given its unique institutionalized structure. Whereas most modern sports have a centralized body to formulate the "rules of the game," mountaineering is governed by a set of complex and largely tacit rules (or "ethics") that are articulated and debated within the pages of specialized periodicals or *alpine journals*, the sport's characteristic literary product.[4] Within these sources, the changing relations of social forces managing mountaineering standards and codes have historically revealed themselves, time and again, in cultural struggles over the form and meaning of the sport, particularly as disparate groups and younger generations sought new challenges and ways of expression.[5]

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[1] Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 52.

[2] Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing," 227-40; Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 3-11; Gruneau, "Modernization or Hegemony," 22.

[3] Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class": 826.

This chapter presents a case study of the major competing interests among climbers in the Rocky Mountains of Canada during the years following the Second World War. In both practice and ideology, mountaineering was fundamentally transformed in this period, perhaps more than at any time before or since, when a wave of young, working-class European immigrants, not content to follow in the footsteps of local, middle-class amateurs, contentiously initiated, in Raymond Williams' terms, an "emergent" era of technical rock climbing and substantially broadened the operative goals/meanings of the sport.[6] Analyzing this complex and fractious shift, this chapter combines an emphasis on the re-invention of mountaineering as a cultural form during the 1948-1961 period, recently popularized as the era in which climbing in the Rockies "came of age," with particular attention to the increased challenges to the hegemony held by the national mountaineering organization, The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), over both the definition and representation of mountaineering.[7]

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[4] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class": 586-87; Douglas A. Brown, "Fleshing-out Field Notes: Prosaic, Poetic and Picturesque Representations of Canadian Mountaineering, 1906-1940," *Journal of Sport History* 30, 3 (2003): 352.

[5] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 242-43; Robinson, "The Golden Years": 1-19.

[6] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 123.

Informed by a Gramscian-based, cultural studies tradition, this analysis relies largely on the accounts written by mountaineers in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*), which, as the ACC's official record of sporting achievement, was annually published with few exceptions since 1907. Accounts printed in the *CAJ*, particularly between 1948 and 1961, provide a unique opportunity to reflect upon the tensions and conflicts that existed within mountaineering culture, and the ways in which these were articulated and resolved by assembling contradictory cultural elements into what sociologist David Robbins called, "teeth gritting harmony."[8] More specifically, this chapter examines the writings of the period's most contentious climber, Hans Gmoser (1932-2006), a young Austrian emigrant, whose early activities in the Rockies' eastern front challenged local tradition and the hegemony of the ACC unlike anything before. En route to this analysis, an initial examination of the controversial first ascent of Brussels Peak in 1948, as well as the ensuing debates over the style in which it was climbed, helps to place post-war mountaineering practices in their historical context.

Brussels Peak: "The Last Unclimbable"

In more than four decades since the 1906 formation of the ACC, only a small, privileged group of amateur climbers had shown any sustained interest in the Rockies, especially after the 1920s, when most of the major peaks of the range had been ascended for the first time. International climbing in the range inevitably declined, just as it had earlier in Alps, as wealthy mountaineers-cum-explorers were forced, by the particular structural form of their sport, to venture farther and farther afield in search of unclimbed peaks, the ascents of which were the sole measure of sporting success.[9] The economic vicissitudes of the Depression, and the succeeding five years of wartime strictures, strained amateur leisure movements in Canada, particularly in the eastern rain shadow of the Rockies, where the 1930s brought crop failures, starvation, and social strife across the dustbowl prairies.[10] Popular historians of mountaineering, such as Chic Scott, Andy Selters, and Chris Jones, contend that climbing during this period "drifted from the mainstream of international trends," "became moribund for decades," and "ground to a virtual standstill during the Second World War."[11] While climbers in the Rockies continued to demonstrate their eagerness for "pioneering excursions off the beaten path," expressed, for instance, in the elaboration of ski mountaineering in the 1930s, their unwillingness to embrace European climbing techniques put many of the difficult international climbs of the interwar period well beyond their reach.[12]

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[7] The activities considered to be on the cutting edge of sporting achievement in the Rockies during this period have been recently chronicled by Chic Scott in a chapter titled "Canadian Mountaineering Comes of Age, 1951-1990." Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 166-220.

[8] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class": 581.

Consider the controversy that ensued following the first ascent of Brussels Peak by Jack Lewis and Ray Garner in 1948. Located fifty kilometres south of Jasper in the Athabasca Valley, Brussels Peak prominently strikes the skyline above the Icefields Parkway, which, completed in 1940, connects Banff and Jasper national parks.

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[9] See Donnelly "The Invention of Tradition," 238-39.

[10] Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 200-01; Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 200.

[11] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 106-07; Selters, *Ways to the Sky*, 80; Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 170.

[12] Robinson, "Off the Beaten Path: Ski Mountaineering and the Weight of Tradition in the Canadian Rockies, 1909-1939," *International Journal of the History of Sport* (2007): forthcoming. Quotation from Von Lillienfeld, "A Spring Ski Excursion": 75.

Discernible for its fin-like shape, dark limestone, and isolated position and topography, Brussels was, by the 1940s, widely held by climbers to be the "last unclimbable" in the Rockies. It was not unclimbed for lack of attention. The peak had been attempted by the best of the few pre-war climbers then active in North America, including Americans Fred Ayres, John Oberlin, and a young Fred Becky, as well as Canadians Rex Gibson, Bob Hind, Sterling Hendricks, and Ferris Neave, among many others. Had Brussels been situated in the Yosemite Valley of California, perhaps, as Chris Jones suggested, "it would have been climbed in the late 1930s because the rock climbing was well within the capabilities of the prewar climbers."[13] But Brussels is in the Rocky Mountains. A strenuous approach, erratic weather patterns, complex route finding, as well as loose and rotten rock, often conspire to make the peak a very different proposition from the sun-warmed, compact granite crags of California. The renowned British climber Frank Smythe, for instance, likened Brussels to "a wall built up of unmortared bricks by a gang of untutored workmen."[14] Along with American David Wessel and Canadian Doug Crosby, Smythe had attempted the peak twice in 1946, but found that the only promising routes "invariably end in overhanging rocks." He deemed it harder than any peak in European Alps.[15] Was it climbable? "Not by normal mountaineering methods," Smythe wrote in 1948. "Only, I think, by 'direct aid' methods—that is, by the employment of pitons (iron spikes) and other paraphernalia of mountaineering steeplejack."[16]

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[13] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 220.

[14] Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, 96. Smythe was easily the most successful mountaineering writer England had ever known. He was equally well known for his role as a team member on several prewar British expeditions to Mount Everest in 1933, 1936, and 1938. See Unsworth, *Everest*, 161. During the Second World War, Smythe served in the Canadian Rockies, training a Scottish regiment, the Lovat Scouts, in winter-mountain warfare. See Scott, *Powder Pioneers*, 91-5.

[15] Frank S. Smythe, *Rocky Mountains* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1948), 107.

The most significant and contested debate among climbers in the Rockies over the meaning and form of mountaineering surrounded the use of fixed protection, which was first developed in Europe in the 1890s. At that time, British mountaineering trends were hardly established in the Canadian ranges, when, on the limestone walls and sandstone towers of the eastern Alps, Austrian, German, and Italian climbers, mostly, began ascending new routes that were unimaginably steep to Victorian sensibilities, pulling themselves up on fingertip holds and stepping out onto minute edges.[17] The steeper terrain further impressed upon climbers the well-known maxim of the day: *the leader must not fall*. Ropes, then, were used to protect those following the leader, who, once at a secured stance (or belay) above, would keep the rope joining the group tight to protect the follower(s) as they climbed up to the belay. However, for the lead climber, who climbed well above the belay anchor, there was little protection from a fall, especially in the absence of natural rock features around which the rope could be slung. The forces generated from a lead fall had potentially fatal consequences for the entire group. Thus, as European climbers ventured out onto steeper terrain, specialized techniques were developed to protect the party's upward push, including the use of pitons, steel spikes of various shapes and configurations that, fitted at one end with an eye, were hammered into cracks or seams in the rock. Pitons afforded climbers a point of security, a fixed anchor on steep terrain, into which the lead climber could clip a rope with a *karabiner*, a pearshaped, metal snap-link, and proceed upwards with confidence or "indirect aid," while the second climber, below, fed out the rope that bound them together.[18]

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[16] Ibid., 111.

[17] Selters, *Ways to the Sky*, 88.

Victorian climbers, however, vehemently rallied against the use of such hardware, scorning the devices and rebuking climbers as unsporting and unethical. They even refused to coin a word for the German *karabiner* because it was deemed "un-English in name and character."[19] Anglo-Germanic rivalries were particularly well-entrenched when, beginning as early as the 1920s, reports from the eastern Alps suggested that youthful Continentals were even using pitons as "direct aid," pulling up on them in the absence of natural holds and attaching to them improvised foot stirrups made of cord. Subsequently, the Alpine Club's (England) dominance over the meaning and ethics of mountaineering practices was increasingly challenged.[20]

After the Second World War, the first ascent of Brussels Peak brought these very issues to the forefront of debates over mountaineering practices in Canada. In the summer of 1948, just as John Oberlin and Fred Becky's attempt had failed, another American team arrived in Jasper with designs on Brussels: Jack "Jiggs" Lewis, a young mountain guide from the Tetons; Ray and Virginia Garner, a husband-and-wife filmmaking team from Arizona; and Ed George.[21] The approach up the Fryatt Valley was well travelled that season. While hiking in, the foursome passed yet another unsuccessful party: John and Ruth Mendenhall, two prolific Sierra Club climbers, who were also there to climb Brussels, but had backed off, saying that they "could not find a safe belay point to justify climbing."[22] Likely having read Smythe, Lewis and Garner were undeterred: they brought with them an array of pitons and "tamp-ins" (expansion bolts) for just such an occasion. "At long last we could relax," Garner wrote. "The mountain was ours—for the taking."[23]

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[18] The English spelling is "carabiner."

[19] C. Engel, *A History of Mountaineering in the Alps* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), 212.

[20] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 238.

[21] Little information is known about Ed George, aside from the fact that he was an American.

Lewis and Ray Garner made their first attempt on July 21. From their camp in the Fryatt Canyon, the two men worked their way up a small, steep drainage, past treeline, to eventually gain the saddle between Brussels and Mount Christie. Above them rose their planned line of ascent: the distinctive prow of Brussels' northeast ridge (see Fig. 23). Not long after scrambling up to the base of the ridge, well before reaching the previous climbers' highpoint, Lewis and Garner did what had never been done in the Canadian Rockies:

> We placed a tamp-in ring bolt for protection. This method was developed by Ben Pedrick of the Kachinas. A hole, one-half inch in diameter, and about one inch deep, is drilled with a spiral type steel drill. This goes in much faster than a star drill. Then the lead sheathed tamp is set in place with a special tamp tool. A five-sixteenths eye-bolt is then screwed into the steel core of the tamp.[24]

By the end of the first day, higher on the mountain than any previous party, they had placed three expansion bolts and driven in numerous pitons for protection. Leaving a rope hanging over the crux difficulty to facilitate their return, the climbers retreated, confident that success was close at hand.

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[22] Ray Garner, "Conquering Brussels Peak," *CAJ* 32 (1949): 23.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.: 24.

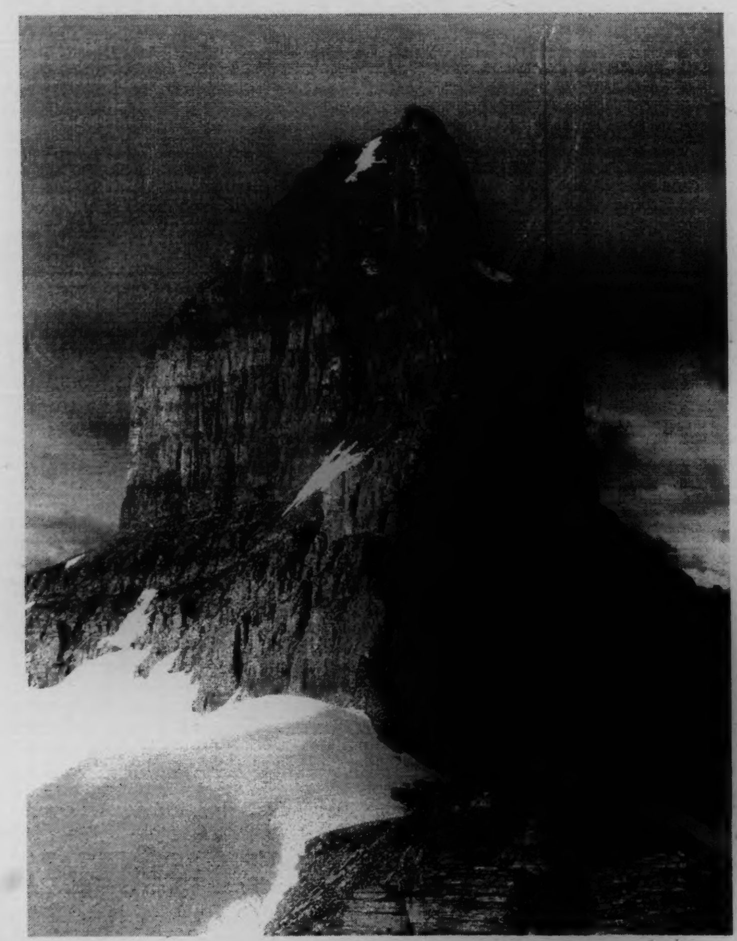

Fig. 23 Author. The Northeast Ridge of Brussels Peak from the Brussels-Christie Col. The mountain was named after an un-armed merchant ship commanded by English Captain Algernon Fryatt during the First World War. The Lewis-Garner Route roughly follows the shadow line of the ridge in the foreground. Photograph, August 2006.

Two days later, in poor weather, Lewis and Garner returned with difficulty to their high point, this time with Ed George. Lewis led off, struggling up a narrow, off-width crack through an overhang. Garner described him as using "what we like to call the 'flesh-crawl' technique. For several seconds, as he rounded the bulge, his legs stuck out into the air. When he finally grunted past it, he drilled a hole and placed a tamp for security."[25] With the weather deteriorating, George volunteered to wait on a small ledge; he knew that two climbers were faster than three. Consequently, after nine hours of climbing from the col, Lewis and Garner reached the top, "a curving mound of loose shale (which looked as if it had just slid out of the rear of a dump truck), a very unspectacular summit for a very spectacular mountain." Despite their unattractive perch, they were elated. The fact that it was Lewis's twenty-first birthday enhanced their success. "We had climbed our mountain," Garner wrote. "We had conquered that old black devil…."[26]

Not everyone agreed. News of the ascent provoked bitter resentment from the dominant climbing establishment in Canada. Frank Smythe, for example, in *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (1950), condemned the use of pitons and expansion bolts, saying those who used them "have not the courage nor capacity to climb without them."[27] Despite Garner's claim to have placed the hardware "for protection only" and that "no direct aid was used," Smythe, who was forty-nine-years old, continued to huff: "I still regard Mt. Brussels unclimbed, and my feelings are no different from those I should have were I to hear that a helicopter was to deposit its passengers on the summit of that mountain just so that he could boast that he had trodden an untrodden mountain top."[28] The irony of his dyed-in-the-wool conservatism is that even Smythe, himself, while in the company of Noel Odell and John Ross, had hammered in a piton for protection only a year earlier during the first recorded ascent of Mount Colin, a sculpted fan of upturned strata just east of Jasper.[29] Nevertheless, Smythe's position on the Brussels matter was unyielding: "To climb it by artificial methods, to knock pitons in all the way up it in order merely to get to the top, is a profanation of that mountain and of the sport of mountaineering."[30]

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[25] Ibid.: 26.

[26] Ibid.: 30.

[27] Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, 101.

[28] Garner, "Conquering Brussels Peak": 24; Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, 107.

Outrage among local traditionalists prompted the editor of the *CAJ* to print a bitterly satirical account written by Bob Hind, a leading climber in the Rockies, who later became the vice president (1954-1955), president (1964-1965), and honourary president (1991-2000) of the ACC.[31] Titled "The First Ascent of Dumkopf Tower," Hind's article not only portrayed a deranged, mechanically-minded climber, it also fuelled the common association of technical climbing with Teutonic fanaticism, even Nazism.[32] Decades earlier in Europe, the rise of totalitarianism had neatly coincided with a shift among young climbers from Austria and Germany, who aggressively applied new philosophies and techniques—especially the use of pitons and carabiners—to the icy north faces of the western Alps. Known as the Munich School (or the "dangle and whack school," as they were disparagingly referred to in Britain), the cohort initiated some of the most dramatic climbs of the period. Unsurprisingly, fascists latched on, as did the world press, and the movement was besmirched.[33] According to mountaineering historian Walt Unsworth,

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[29] Smythe forever regretted the act, which he documented in a chapter titled "Failure and Success on Mount Colin." See Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, 142-61.

[30] Ibid., 107.

[31] See G.W. Templeman, "Robin C. (Bob) Hind, 1911-2000," *CAJ* 84 (2001): 160.

[32] R.C. Hind, "The First Ascent of Dumkopf Tower," *CAJ* 34 (1951): 78-50. It should be noted that Hind, as well, despite his distain for fixed protection, used a piton when he climbed the right-hand side of the famous gendarme on Bugaboo Spire (now commonly used as the rappel route) in 1946. Rex Gibson, "Climbs in the Main Bugaboo Group," *CAJ* 30 (1947): 155-57; Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 157.

[33] Both National Socialist Germany's war of expansion and West Germany's re-emergence as an economic and political power appropriated popular mountaineering imagery symbolically to further their

> when the Nazi Party came to power in Germany, they deliberately twisted the philosophy of Nietzsche to their own purposes and this led some observers to believe that the extreme German climbing of the period was a product of National Socialism when in fact it was merely an extension of a philosophy Austro-German climbers had had from the beginning.[34]

The distinction was lost on Hind. His central character was “Aldorf Hilter,” who assaulted Dumkopft Tower using a mythical “spring anchor” device for cracks, a gun-like “Boltsetter” that fired bolts directly “into the rock with a small charge of powder,” as well as a ridiculous number of pitons: seventy pitons were said to have been placed over a sixty-foot pitch, “**not one of which was used for direct aid!**”[35] Through an assortment of far-fetched, technological acrobatics, Hind’s protagonists “conquered” the previously unclimbed tower, whereupon Hilter “pulled out a small red flag with a queer black crooked cross on its centre…. ‘I like to leave them around,’ he said shamefacedly. ‘It reminds me of old times.’”[36]

Hind’s “Dumkopf Tower” featured prominently in the 1951 volume’s premier mountaineering section, which is a curious place to find such a parody given the often sober tone of the club’s revered “record book.”[37] Its prominent presentation, however, articulated not only the ACC’s lingering post-war antagonisms in Canada and attitude towards the use of fixed protection, but reinscribed older prejudices held by some traditionalists towards climbers of Germanic origin. Voices of discord were accorded

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goals and aspirations. See Höbusch, “Germany’s ‘Mountain of Destiny’”: 137-68; Harold Höbusch, “Rescuing German Alpine Tradition: Nanga Parbat and Its Visual Afterlife,” *Journal of Sport History* 29, 1 (2002): 48-76. Undoubtedly, there were links between the climbing movement and larger political trends.

[34] Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 105.

[35] Hind, “The First Ascent of Dumkopf Tower”: 78-9.

[36] Ibid.: 83.

[37] Sport historian Douglas A. Brown characterizes the early narratives in the *CAJ* as mostly “formulaic and overwhelmingly banal.” See Brown, “Fleshing-out Field Notes”: 348.

less distinction. In this sense, the journal was the principal site for both the production of the dominant culture and the active marginalization and containment of oppositional sporting forms and practices. Located deep in the back pages of the 1953 volume, for instance, was John Dudra's pointed entreaty, "In Defence of a Piton." Dudra, a young coastal climber, disclosed that

> the term 'artificial aid' has a very wide meaning not fully understood by all people especially those not pioneering new mountains and routes. A man may look down on pitons, bolts, and all other paraphernalia that the fanatics are supposed to carry, but never stop to ponder that he himself may be climbing in boots that have tricouni or vibram soles, or using an ice axe or crampons to help him move freely over ice. These and many other things are aids, artificial but not considered so, which help the climber make his ascent easier and safer. Where are we to draw the line? If we were to take away all the aids we would be tackling a mountain with bare hands and feet regardless of circumstances or conditions.[38]

The main reason why most mountaineers frowned upon "hardware climbers," Dudra pointed out, was that "they think of them as being unsportsmanlike, especially if pitons are being used for direct aid."[39] Frank Smythe raised the contentious issue after the Brussels ascent: "Does the sportsman take an automatic weapon to kill his tiger? He does not," he raved.[40] Dudra, in turn, contended that "climbs requiring direct aid would be impossible without them" and that the "use of pitons is not due to the inability to climb properly without them."[41] On the contrary, climbers using hardware could do as much or more, particularly in a range of mountains, such as the Canadian Rockies, where the large quantity of poor limestone increased the need for sound anchor protection on steeper terrain.

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[38] John L. Dudra, "In Defence of a Piton," *CAJ* 36 (1953): 150-51. Dudra was a highly accomplished Vancouver-based climber accredited with many difficult ascents throughout North America. In 1952, for example, he made the second ascent of the Devil's Tower in Wyoming and made several first and second ascents on the Cathedral Spires of South Dakota. See "John L. Dudra," *CAJ* 42 (1959): 92.

[39] Dudra, "In Defence of a Piton": 150.

[40] Smythe, *Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, 106.

[41] Dudra, "In Defence of a Piton": 150-51. In hindsight, Dudra's comment seems somewhat short-sighted, because later generations of climbers would relish in "free climbing" what their predecessors could only aid.

As evident by the fundamental difference between Smythe's dominant perspective and Dudra's oppositional one, both men articulated a range of hegemonic pressures and limits associated with an emergent technology. For locals who had not seen how practised rock climbers could move up steep rock, Lewis and Garner's reliance on bolts and pitons seemed a threat that, if encouraged, would divert climbers from "real" climbing skills.[42] But the cold reception of the Brussels ascent—and of technical climbing, in general—suggests even deeper complexities. During the immediate post-war era in Canada, the dominant form and meaning of mountaineering, as espoused by the ACC, became increasingly contested by deep class, ethnic, and generational tensions. Until this point, if printed words were any indication, climbing in Canada remained, with few exceptions, a club-based pastime of middle- and upper-class amateurs; participants were predominantly English-speaking, and most were older men.[43] The ethics, form, and style of their pastime, founded on what many historians refer to as meritocratic principles, were highly exclusive, requiring participants to conform to upper middle-class ideas of *how* one should play sport.[44]

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[42] Selters, *Ways to the Sky*, 142.

[43] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada, 1906 to 1929": 39; Christopher Dummit, "Risk on the Rocks: Modernity, Manhood, and Mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia," *BC Studies* (Spring 2004): 3-29. Interestingly, the editor of the *CAJ* from 1942 to 1952 was a woman: Margaret Fleming, a modest climber and ski enthusiast from Winnipeg, whose twenty years of editorial service for the *CAJ* stood, until very recently, more-or-less *invisible*. See PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, "Margaret Fleming and the Alpine Club of Canada: A Woman's Place in Mountain Leisure and Literature, 1932-1952," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, 3 (2001): 55. Historian Colleen Skidmore has recently noted that "wide-ranging histories of women climbing in Canada, or of Canadian women climbing around the world, have yet to be published...." Colleen Skidmore, ed., *This Wild Spirit: Women in the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2006), 354. Indeed, according to ACC records, women's membership in the club averaged about forty percent between the 1920s and 1940s. Along with Skidmore's important edited volume, three other recent contributions focus on women climbers in Canada: PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, eds. *Mountain Diaries: the Alpine Adventures of Margaret Fleming* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 2004); Katherine Anne Bridge, *Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer* (Montreal: XYZ Publication, 2002); and Karen Routledge, "'Being a Girl Without Being A Girl': Gender and Mountaineering on Mount Waddington, 1926-36," *BC Studies* 141 (2004): 31-58.

While they clearly employed emergent technologies and were subsequently berated for them, Garner and Lewis were operating within the dominant discourses of North American mountaineering culture, which, by the late forties, remained strongly linked to its British-imperial heritage in both structure and ideology. For Garner and Lewis, Brussels Peak really did represent "the last unclimbable." It should be hardly surprising, then, that Garner's account, "Conquering Brussels Peak," featured squarely in the 1949 *CAJ*'s leading section or that a full-page image of Brussels' Northeast Ridge figured as the issue's frontispiece—a sort of emblematic trophy for the dominant mountaineering culture.[45] However, as the following analysis will show, the controversy concerning the 1948 ascent of Brussels Peak *was* symptomatic of a larger emergent shift, and not simply a new phase of dominant culture, that would fundamentally refigure, in Bourdieu's terms, the symbolic capital ascribed to mountaineering achievement, and ultimately challenge the ACC's hegemonic power over the representation of the form and meaning of the sport.[46]

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[44] See Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005), 74; Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 26; John Holt, "Amateurism and its Interpretation: The Social Origins of British Sport," *Innovation in Social Science Research* 5, 4 (1992): 29; Nancy Bouchier, "'For the Love of the Game and the Honour of the Town': Organized Sport, Local Culture and Middle-Class Hegemony in Two Ontario Towns, 1838-1895," PhD dissertation (University of Western Ontario, 1990), 198.

[45] *CAJ* 32 (1949): unpaginated. The photograph was taken by Ruth Mendenhall during the summer of 1948.

[46] Drawing from Marx, Bourdieu examined how various forms of capital—cultural, symbolic, social, as well as economic—grant power within something he imagined as the general "habitus." Obviously these forms of capital are related, but symbolic power is significant: it means to have the

Hans Gmoser, Yamnuska, and the Emergent

The construction of an emergent climbing culture was inextricably bound up with the larger transformations of work and leisure that characterized the post-war period.[47] Across the country, in spite of the war debt, the *boom* had begun: a housing boom, a baby boom, a mining and drilling boom, even an immigration boom.[48] A million-and-a-half people came to Canada between 1945 and 1957, many leaving war-torn Europe hoping to benefit from the "high and stable rates of employment" in a country that was now overwhelmingly urban.[49] A new forty-hour work week and an overall increase in annual vacation time became standard in many industries, affording workers greater opportunities to pursue leisure out of doors.[50] As much as the long-promised prosperity was welcomed by the swelling middle classes, the resulting widespread increase in the desire for outdoor pursuits—particularly those, like mountaineering, that served to soothe the growing anti-modern anxieties among the bourgeois—further perpetuated their conundrum.[51] Outdoor recreation had suddenly become a mass phenomenon.[52]

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capacity to delineate a social world and its categories of distinction. See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," *Media, Culture and Society* 2, 3 (1980): 262.

[47] "Emergent" cultural elements, according to Raymond Williams, are those effectively formed from "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships" that are oppositional (and unequal) to dominant cultural elements. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 123.

[48] Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 16-8.

[49] Morton, *A Short History of Canada*, 242-43.

[50] *Hours of Work in Canada: A Historical Series* (Ottawa: Economic and Research Branch, Canada Department of Labour, 1971); *Trends in Working Time* (Ottawa: The Wages Research Division, Economics and Research Branch, Department of Labour, 1974).

[51] Dummitt, "Risk on the Rocks": 4-5; Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 3-20.

Hans Gmoser was among an early wave of European climbers to immigrate to Canada following the Second World War. Twenty-years old and penniless, Gmoser came to the prairies of Alberta from his native Austria in December, 1951.[53] The following spring, anxious to visit the Rockies for the first time, Gmoser hitchhiked west along what is today's 1A Highway from Calgary to Banff, where he was immediately impressed by a great limestone mass just north of the road, sitting up high and apart from the other peaks of the mountains' eastern front. A kilometre-and-a-half long, and 360-metres high at its summit, the peak's south face looked so steep, so sheer, that the locals who lived below it on the Stoney First Nations Reserve called it Yamnuska, "the flat-faced mountain" (see Fig. 24).[54]

What excited the young Austrian immigrant was a vision not shared by many climbers in Canada during the early 1950s. Aside from Lawrence Grassi's 1925 ascent of the First Sister, which was likely the first pure rock climb in the Bow Valley, there was virtually no significant (recorded) rock climbing occurring in the eastern Rockies, or elsewhere in the range, for that matter.[55] Among the local mountaineers, according to

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[52] Wilson, *The Culture of Nature*, 27.

[53] Born in Braunau on July 7, 1932, Gmoser had developed a strong attraction for the mountains at an early age, despite having grown up during the troubled war years. See Chic Scott, "Hans Gmoser: Canadian Mountain Pioneer, 1932-2006," *Gripped: The Climbing Magazine* 8, 5 (2006): 22. Ironically, Braunau was also the birthplace of Adolf Hitler (1897-1945).

[54] On current maps the spelling is not Yamnuska, but *Îyâmnathka.* In 1961, the mountain was officially named "Mount John Laurie," which paid remembrance to a Calgary high-school teacher who was a close friend to the Stoney Nakoda community. The mountain's name was amended in 1984, at the request of the Stoney Nakoda community, to "Mount Laurie (Îyâmnathka)." See Chic Scott, Dave Dornian, and Ben Gadd, *The Yam: Fifty Years of Climbing on Yamnuska* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2003), 24. Since the 1950s, climbers have referred to the cliff as Yamnuska, often times as simply Yam.

[55] Andrea Lorenzo Grassi (1890-1980) emigrated from Italy in 1912 and based most of his life in the mining town of Canmore, Alberta. Raised in the small Alpine village of Famlmenta, in the mountainous province of Piedmont, northern Italy, Grassi was an exceptional climber: "probably the finest rock climber the club [ACC] has ever seen," a newspaper reported in 1925. Untitled newspaper article, 15

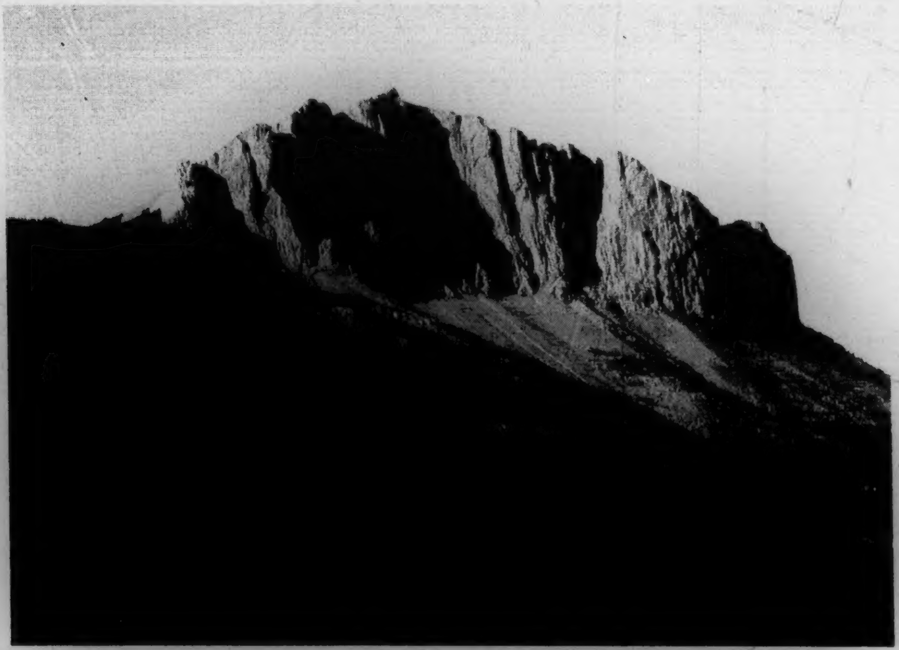

Fig. 24 Author. The south face of Yamnuska from the southwest. Photograph, September 2003.

long-time Rockies climber Geoff Powter, there existed "a general feeling—fuelled both by technical and ethical limitations—that 'the best climbs had been done.'"[56] During the 1930s and 1940s, climbing in the Rockies mostly entailed repeated ascents of low-angle snow, ice, and easy rock routes to the summits of mountains.[57] The prime objective was, of course, to reach the top. In Europe, however, while the attainment of unclimbed

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August 1925, for the Archive of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff. Unique in the Rockies for his skill and tenacity, Grassi was also exceedingly modest and rarely recorded his exploits in published accounts. Moreover, he often climbed solo. A former climbing friend of Grassi's once stated that "no one will ever know how many climbs he made. He often did solo routes which had never been recorded, including many first ascents." Don Beers, *Banff-Assiniboine: A Beautiful World* (Calgary: Highline Publishing, 1993), 201.

[56] Geoff Powter, "History," *Bow Valley Rock*, ed. Chris Perry and Joe Josephson (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2000), 12.

[57] During the 1920s and thirties, there were three ascents that might be considered exceptions: the Northeast Face of Mount Victoria, the East Ridge of Mount Temple, and the Fuhrer Arête on Mount Robson. To be sure, these climbs were more difficult than the fashion of the period permitted. It is important to point out, however, that they were all completed by foreigners led by professional mountain guides. See Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 160-62.

summits remained significant, the *route* itself had increasingly become the chief object of desire and, perhaps to a lesser extent, so too had the style in which it was climbed: whether it was done guideless, in winter, or solo, perhaps.

Specifically, the innovation that sustained and permitted the further elaboration of sporting form, especially where unclimbed peaks were scarce, was the route. This innovation encouraged the acceptance of risk, the elaboration of new equipment, the codification of technical difficulties, and the maintenance of a record of such.[58] Yet, in the Rockies, the institutionalized practices and values asserted by the ACC through its journal disavowed the wide variety of climbing potentials, and Yamnuska's southern walls are a prime example. For instance, although children from YMCA Camp Chief Hector had been hiking up the backside of Yamnuska for twenty years and ACC's Calgary Section had been conducting rock schools on the sandstone crags near the road since the late 1940s, it seems that no one showed the slightest interest in climbing the face itself.[59] As terrain to be climbed, it remained utterly unrecognizable. But herein lies an essential fact of hegemonic relations: no dominant ideology or practice can ever exhaust or completely determine the range of possible practices in cultural life. The ACC's hegemony was not absolute, nor could it ever be.[60] Gmoser was immediately inspired by the vast potential he saw on Yamnuska. "In one straight line it rose to the sky," he wrote, recalling his first impression of the cliff. "My eyes fastened upon it and as the mountain stood there solemn in this May evening, a silent promise was made...."[61]

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[58] See Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 240-41.

[59] Scott, Dornian, Gadd, *The* Yam, 32; Glenn Reisenhofer has recently suggested that Grassi may have been climbing on Yamnuska's south face *decades* prior to Gmoser's arrival in Canada, although much of the evidence to suggest this is circumstantial. See Glenn Reisenhofer, "Yamnuska's Secret: A Wondering," *CAJ* 89 (2006): 90-2.

[60] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 125; Gruneau, "Modernization or Hegemony," 29.

With two other new Canadians, Isabel Spreat of Britain and Leo Grillmair of Austria, Gmoser fulfilled his pledge on November 23, 1952. The group concentrated their efforts on a prominent right-leaning system of broken ledges, corners, and chimneys, just right of centre on Yamnuska's south face. Wearing a pair of crêpe-soled street shoes, the twenty-two-year-old Grillmair successfully led the final crux pitch up an awkward, narrow chimney system, and, within moments, pulled himself onto Yamnuska's windy top. In honour of Grillmair's difficult lead, the route was later named Grillmair Chimneys.[62]

Almost a year later, Gmoser added a second route up the cliff, this time with his long-time friend and climbing partner Franz Dopf, who emigrated from Austria late in 1952. Calgary Route, as they called it, followed the first major break in the face, just west of the summit. Gmoser had attempted the route earlier that summer with Kurt Lukas, another Austrian expatriate, but, in the end, they turned back after Lukas took a fall. To be sure, it was more challenging than Grillmair Chimneys, particularly the upper section, where the successful Gmoser and Dopf fixed several pitons for protection.[63]

"We came again and again," Gmoser recalled,

> and each time this mountain became dearer to us and each time our ties grew more intimate. So far we had picked the easiest routes. But every time when we

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[61] Hans Gmoser, "Yamnuska," *CAJ* 41 (1958): 61.

[62] Hans Gmoser, "Mount Yamnuska via the South Face," *CAJ* 37 (1954): 109-10; Gmoser, "Yamnuska": 61.

[63] Hans Gmoser, "Mount Yamnuska (South Face)," *CAJ* 37 (1954): 110; Gmoser, "Yamnuska": 62; for a good summation of these ascents, see Scott, Dornian, and Gadd, *The Yam*, 32-7; Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 167-70.

> came our eyes would wander across the smooth rock, trying to find another route, an ideal route—direttissima—a route following the line which a waterdrop [*sic*] would take falling from the summit. Was it possible?[64]

Inspired by the direct routes on the famous walls of the Italian Dolomites, the group wished to climb a route that rose in a straight line from the scree slopes at the foot of the wall to the summit.[65] Beginning in 1956, Gmoser, Grillmair, Dopf, and Lucas made several attempts at such a route on Yamnuska, but it was not until September, 1957, that Gmoser and Grillmair, along with another newcomer, German-born Heinz Kahl, achieved success. They called their route Direttissima. Although the climbing difficulty was fairly sustained, the crux lead came low on the route. Forty-four metres above the ground, a short, rounded crack, capped by an overhang, proved too difficult to climb by conventional methods. After several attempts, the climbers drove carefully-crafted wooden wedges into a limestone fracture. Suspended from a hole drilled through each wedge, a long nylon loop—from which foot stirrups were attached—provided the climbers with a sort of step ladder through the section. The direct aid was, according to mountaineering historian Chic Scott, "a new type of climbing, one that had never been seen in Canada before."[66] The route was one of the most formidable in the country.

The establishment of Yamnuska's earliest routes represented both a new standard of rock climbing in Canada and a shift in the ACC's power to represent, signify, and claim semiotic reign over climbing in the Rockies. Evident of an emergent culture, printed deep in the back pages of the ACC's 1954 *CAJ*, Gmoser's route descriptions for Grillmair Chimneys and Calgary Route revealed a method of classification unused by most climbers in Canada, specifically the use of numeric grades, which, based on a European system, described and recorded technical difficulty.[67] The codification was first advocated by a leading protagonist in the Munich School, Austrian climber Willo Welzenbach, who, during the late twenties, extended an older five-point system to six grades, each indicated by both a number from I to VI and an adjectival description: Grade I was *leicht*, easy, while Grade VI was *ausserst schweirig*, supremely difficult.[68] Climbers in Canada, as noted earlier, were not unaware of trends sweeping the European climbing world.[69] And they understood perfectly well what grades meant. Climbs of the sixth class were equated with aid climbing. Even the name—*sixth class*—hinted at something beyond the commonplace. More than anything, though, the codification nagged the old guard, for it called into question their stature among the world's mountaineers. The French mountaineer Lucien Devies had articulated this transition to The Alpine Club (England) almost two decades earlier, when he wrote that the centre of the mountaineering world had long shifted from London to Munich, "where the youth was ambitious and innovation encouraged."[70] Of course, this recognition was clearly not shared by most classically trained British climbers, nor was it espoused by those controlling the ethics, form, and style of mountaineering in the Canadian ranges. Taking direct aim at the exclusionary modes of the dominant, Gmoser surveyed the scene in the Rockies in 1956:

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[64] Gmoser, "Yamnuska": 62.

[65] The ideal was first popularized in the European Alps by Emilio Comici, an Italian longshoreman, who was famed for the first ascent of the north face of the Cima Grande during the early 1930s in the Dolomites. For Comici, the direct line, or *direttissima*, was the purest route one could aspire to climb, that which "a water-drop would take falling from the summit." Qtd. in Selters, *Ways to the Sky*, 148-49. Comici is attributed to teaching the use of pitons and other modern aids techniques to the New Italy Climbing Club, a group of avant-garde climbers that included a young carpenter named Riccardo Cassin.

[66] Scott, Dornian, and Gadd, *The Yam*, 37.

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[67] Grillmair Chimneys was considered to be Grade IV, for example, while *Calgary Route* was Grade V. Hans Gmoser, "First Ascent of 'Sunburst Peak' via the Northeast Face," *CAJ* 37 (1954): 109; Gmoser, "Mount Yamnuska via the South Face": 109-10; Gmoser, "Mount Yamnuska (South Face)": 110.

[68] The adjectival grades are as follows: I *leicht* (easy); II *mittelschwer* (of medium difficulty); III *schweirig* (difficult), IV *sehr schweirig* (very difficult); V *uberaus schweirig* (extremely difficult); VI *ausserst schweirig* (supremely difficult). According to Walt Unsworth, the Roman numerals were said to have derived from the marking system for Swiss and German school examinations. Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 395.

[69] La Force, "The Alpine Club of Canada": 43; Robinson, "The Golden Years": 10.

[70] Qtd. in Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 276.

> It surprised me to find that most climbers in this country don't sympathize with artificial climbing. They also don't seem to practice a classification of climbs, according to their difficulties. Most famous alpine routes [in Europe] are looked upon [by Canadians] as 'suicide climbs,' and some of the climbers go even as far as saying that climbs of the VIth Grade, which is the limit of human ability, have nothing to do anymore with true mountaineering.[71]

In an attempt to bring the ACC's membership into the fold, Gmoser contributed an essay, titled "VIth Grade Climbing," to 1956 *CAJ*. "There would be a much better understanding," he began, "if each party knew as much about the other side as it does about its own."[72] The article recounted an ascent of a so-called suicide route, one that Gmoser had climbed with friends in the Alps, and detailed the various aid techniques and piton craft that he employed. But it also related the group's sheer enjoyment of actual *climbing*: the warm feel of the sun on their backs as it broke through the early morning fog, the satisfaction gained from the specific moves required to overcome a difficult overhang, the moral support and encouragement shared among friends, and so forth. The explicit emphasis on the physicality of climbing was utterly new to the pages of the *CAJ*. In reference to early club members, sport historian Douglas Brown has astutely noted that "…enjoying the effort of movement was not a primary, or even conceivable, objective for these sportspersons."[73] Indeed, within the *CAJ*, an emphasis on physicality generally occurred in the picturesque representations of summit achievement: faded photographs of ordinary bodies in extraordinary places, commemorating the paradigmatic moment of achievement in a sort of symbolic "master-of-all-I-survey" mode that continues to dominate popular mountaineering imagery.[74] In clear opposition, however, Gmoser ended his essay by admitting that "the peak itself did not interest us at all."[75] Topping out on a large plateau just below the summit, the joyful foursome turned and walked down the backside of the mountain by way of a well-travelled "Alpine Club" trail.[76]

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[71] Hans Gmoser, "VIth Grade Climbing," *CAJ* 39 (1956): 89.

[72] Ibid.: 89-90.

[73] Brown, "Fleshing-out Field Notes": 367.

Indicative of a fundamental disjuncture in both the meaning and form of mountaineering, Gmoser's exposé appeared in the final pages of the journal's "Alpine Notes," a miscellany of articles that followed the book reviews and obituaries. The club's most significant achievements and commentary, which appeared in the journal's leading section, clearly did *not* share the same view of technical climbing. Consider, for instance, R.G.L. Irving's essay, "Trends in Mountaineering," which appeared in the 1957 *CAJ.* A British schoolmaster and well-known mountaineer from an earlier period, Irving began by conjuring up the ghost of the late George Leigh Mallory, who, regarded as the symbolic "Galahad" of the English climbing fraternity, died more than three decades earlier on Mount Everest.[77] "Mallory would, I am quite sure," argued Irving, "have been loath to use artificial aids in getting up or across a difficult stretch of rock, and we know how he disliked the idea of using oxygen.[78] Irving felt that the trend towards technical climbing, particularly the graded "performances by Teutonic clubs," resulted from the "less pleasing" leisure that attracted the lower classes: "so that for the vast majority of young climbers, the possibility of making routes on the mountains they have the time and opportunity to climb is by treating rock faces like pin-cushions to make them climbable."[79] Unsympathetic to class-based inequalities, Irving continued to say that "real" climbing—which was "a perfect combination of exploration and mountaineering"—could still be found in the distant ranges of Asia.[80]

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[74] Ibid., 362-66; Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest": 17; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992; London: Routledge, 1993), 201-07.

[75] Gmoser, "VIth Grade Climbing": 92.

[76] The particular route that Gmoser ascended, while unnamed in his article, was either the *Spitzmauer*, climbed with Franz Dopf, Karl Mitterlehner, and Karl Klambauer, on September 8, 1951, or the North Pillar of the *Traunkirchnerkogl*, climbed by the same party on September 23, 1951. Thanks to Chic Scott for this information.

[77] Slemon, "Climbing Mount Everest": 20; Unsworth, *Everest*, 42.

Gmoser took the occasion of writing Direttissima's route description for the *CAJ* to provide a decisive response to Irving's charge that their particular style of climbing was simply an ego-driven performance:

> What were we trying to do? Were we trying to show off? Were we trying to kill ourselves?—No! We wanted to inhale and breathe life again. We were rebelling against an existence which human kind has forced upon itself. We were rebelling against an existence full of distorted values, against an existence where a man is judged by the size of his living-room, by the amount of chromium on his car. But here we were ourselves again; simple and pure. Friends in the mountains.[81]

Anyone who berated technical climbing for lacking "emotion" might well have reconsidered his assumption after reading Gmoser's humanistic and romantic account. "Our joy was indescribable," he wrote, recalling the group's first moments of success:

> Heinz lifted me right off me feet when I came to the top and threw me over his shoulder in an outburst of joy. We were really lost for words and simply laughed and shook our heads. It had been so difficult and at times so frightening that now

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[78] R.L.G. Irving, "Trends in Mountaineering," *CAJ* 40 (1957): 53. Incidentally, Mallory was introduced to the Alps by the Winchester schoolmaster during a class trip in 1904. Unsworth, *Hold the Heights*, 140.

[79] Irving, "Trends in Mountaineering": 57.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Gmoser, "Yamnuska": 63.

> the feeling of relief and joy was simply overwhelming. Silhouetted against the evening sky stood Leo, coiling up the rope which had tied us on many a fine climb. Then he threw it over his shoulder and we slowly walked away.[82]

Direttissima's description appeared in the issue's "Alpine Notes." Featured in the journal's principal section were accounts documenting mostly conventional ascents of unclimbed peaks in the more remote ranges of western Canada, where wilderness travel and general mountaineering skills could still win impressive-sounding summits.

Ideological debates concerning the meaning and form of mountaineering were not solely asserted in the pages of the *CAJ*. Changes in climbing ethics and style were also debated in face-to-face interactions, sometimes fiercely.[83] Reflecting upon the initial ascent of Grillmair Chimneys, as well as a generational divide among post-war climbers in the Rockies, Isabel Spreat commented that "the section people [ACC] probably thought we were nuts. When you're that age, people are often surprised or shocked at what you can get up to."[84] Franz Dopf, as well, remembered being told that "…they would knock out any pitons that we would put in and we, of course, responded that the places that we would put a piton in they wouldn't even get to."[85] This is not to say that all club members were averse to hardware. A trip account from the ACC's Mummery Camp in 1958, for instance, revealed that some participants, such as Roger Neave, Elfeda Pigou, John Owen, and Adolf Bitterlich, used the occasional piton for protection.[86] However, it was at that same camp that Bitterlich "nearly set off an explosion," when, during the club's Annual Meeting, he publicly suggested that "a new element, a new force within the club"—which he dubbed "the young ones"—deserved increased support from the organization.[87] Gmoser remembered that "one could sense a rise of feelings against him [Bitterlick] as he spoke.... It was really disheartening to have heard the flood of narrow-minded, opposing comments, for this wasn't just a question of a few excentric [*sic*] and extreme characters asking for money or for that matter a job."[88]

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[82] Ibid.: 65.

[83] Donnelly, "The Invention of Tradition," 241-42.

[84] Qtd. in Scott, Dornian, and Gadd, *The Yam*, 35.

[85] Qtd. in Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 169.

[86] Elfreda Pigou, "The M's of Mummery," *CAJ* 42 (1959): 100.

Gmoser and his friends were not the only climbers exploring Yamnuska's walls and challenging the ACC's privileged position as the guardians of climbing culture in the Rockies. Beginning in 1957, other newly-arrived immigrants living in Calgary were frequenting the crag, in particular three young, working-class climbers from Britain: Brian Greenwood, Ron Thompson, and Dick Lofthouse. While the intricacies of Direttissima were being worked out, the newcomers focused their attention on a prominent corner system a few hundred metres farther west along the cliff. Their intended route, while not nearly as long as Direttissima, was just as technically demanding. Greenwood and Thompson achieved success on the second attempt. For protection, they used slings on natural rock projections and homemade "chocks," made from machined nuts attached to a wire or cord, which were placed inside narrowing cracks in the rock. It was probably the first time that hammerless hardware was used in the Rockies. In Greenwood's modest opinion, he was only "...doing things that they were doing in Europe in 1920. I wasn't doing anything new, only new in Canada."[89] He called the route Belfry. For the twenty-five-year-old Greenwood, it marked the beginning of a ten-year obsession with the cliff.

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[87] WMCR M224 17, Hans Gmoser, "The Young Ones and the Old Ones," unpublished MS, undated, unpaginated.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Qtd. in Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 171.

By the late 1950s, the skills developed on Yamnuska by Gmoser and his friends were applied to some of the most challenging alpine routes then established in the Rockies. Routes that were seemingly unrepeatable by virtue of their technical challenge were increasingly shorn of their mythic status, as the limits of what was possible were rearticulated by a new generation of climbers. Indicative of this turn were the activities documented in the 1959 *CAJ*'s "Alpine Notes," particularly two repeated ascents up the fabled Mount Alberta, a giant peak in the central Rockies that, because of its technical challenge, staunchly eluded the local climbing establishment for nearly half a century.[90] After four days in August, 1958, Gmoser, Grillmair, and Kahl, along with Sarka Spinkova and Neil Brown, claimed the first Canadian ascent (see Fig. 25).[91] One week later, the summit was reached by Greenwood and Lofthouse, who, grateful to Gmoser's group for leaving a small food cache, joked that the real crux of the ascent was the tedious approach up and over the scree slopes of Woolley Shoulder.[92] Even the Lewis-Garner Route up Brussels Peak, the great tempest of the 1940s, was twice repeated. Californian Mark Powell handily led its second ascent in 1955; in 1960, the route was easily climbed by Gmoser and Kahl, who pointedly avoided the bolts and used only four pitons for the whole ascent. According to Gmoser, if one really wanted to make a point, "it could be climbed without pitons."[93]

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[90] See Robinson, "The Golden Years": 10-12; Langlais, "Alpinism or Nationalism": 54-5.

[91] Sarka Spinkova, "First Canadian Ascent of Mount Alberta," *CAJ* 42 (1959): 45-7.

[92] Dick Lofthouse and Brian Greenwood, "Fourth Ascent of Mt. Alberta, 11,874 feet" *CAJ* 42 (1959): 47-8.

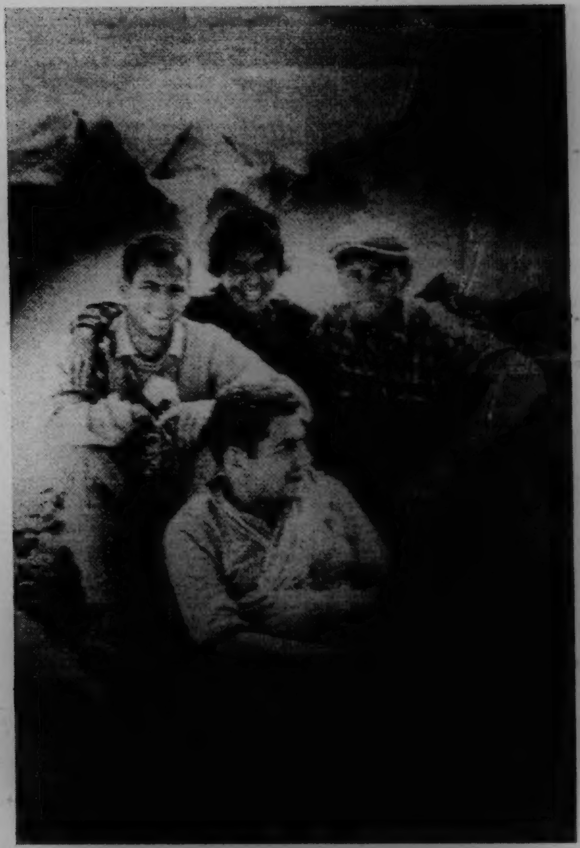

Fig. 25 Leo Grillmair. On the summit of Mount Alberta. Back row (left to right): Neil Brown, Sarka Spinkova, and Hans Gmoser. Front: Heinz Kahl. The great peaks of the Columbia Icefield are in the background (left to right): North Twin, South Twin, and Mount Columbia. Photograph, August 1958. Courtesy of Leo Grillmair.

The enormous symbolic capital associated with the ascents of Mt. Alberta and Brussels Peak, among others, hoisted Gmoser, for the first time, to mountaineering ascendancy in the Rockies.[94] Recognition had its rewards. In the 1961 *CAJ*—appearing in the same prominent section that Hind's "Dumkopf Tower" had occupied only ten years

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[93] Hans Gmoser, "How Steep is Steep?" *CAJ* 44 (1961): 54.

[94] In addition to climbing Mt. Alberta and Brussels Peak, between 1957 and 1960, Gmoser guided clients up the southwest face of Mt. Robson, participated in what was likely the first ascent of Alaska's Mt. Blackburn, and led a successful expedition up Mt. Logan's challenging East Ridge. See Sarka Spinkova, "Mount Robson," *CAJ* 41 (1958): 54-6; Karl Ricker, "The All Canadian Mount Logan Expedition," *CAJ* 43 (1960): 1-29.

earlier—were two essays authored by Gmoser, including the journal's leading article, which documented an epic, high-profile attempt at a 300-kilometre, high-level ski traverse along the Continental Divide between Lake Louise and Jasper.[95] However, it was the prominent positioning of his second article that fully revealed his rise to distinction in the local climbing establishment. It was a scolding review of North American mountaineering reporting itself, titled "How Steep is Steep?" "After reading the reports in various alpine publications," began Gmoser,

> one can come to only two conclusions: either there are still a few supermen climbing in those mountains, or else most of us are so impressed by our deeds that we tend to exaggerate them, sometimes to quite an extent.... In giving an official report in a specialized magazine or journal, it is absolutely necessary to stick as close to the facts as one possibly can and not get carried away by one's exploits.[96]

The publication of the appeal indicates a fundamental and discursive shift in the way mountaineering accomplishment was both recorded and valued. Alerting the climbing establishment to the importance of accurately detailing specific route information, Gmoser publicly demanded, for the first time in mountaineering's seventy-year history in Canada, that significance be afforded to not only the attainment of unclimbed summits, but also the actual routes themselves; and repeating them, sometimes over and over again, became a necessary training tool as rock-climbing skills grew increasingly necessary to sustain the first-ascent-oriented culture of the sport.

Suddenly, there was *much* to do locally. Gmoser pointed the journal's readership to limitless possibilities in the Kananaskis, Banff, and Lake Louise areas. "I will be too old to climb," Gmoser wrote, "before I can do a tenth of the many climbs which I see all around, which have never been done and which have gone unnoticed to most."[97] To those earlier mountaineers who berated the Rockies for their poor quality of rock, Gmoser responded follows:

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[95] Hans Gmoser, "High Level Ski Route from Lake Louise to Jasper, 1960," *CAJ* 44 (1961): 1-17. This was the second attempt at what would later be called the Great Divide Traverse. Also see Scott, *Powder Pioneers*, 137-40.

[96] Gmoser, "How Steep is Steep?": 51.

> It is thanks to those "explorers" that almost the whole chain of the Rockies falls under the category of "rockpiles, vertical scree, etc. . . ." There is loose rock to be found in every range. Granted, there is more loose rock in some than others, but I have yet to see a steep rockface [*sic*] which is composed of loose rock. It has to be good rock because of the very nature of it. And since the Canadian Rockies show more formidable cliffs than any other mountain range I have ever seen they certainly rank among the best rock climbing areas we have.[98]

What prompted this assessment was his ascent of Brussels Peak. Having studied the various accounts by Smythe and Garner, among others, Gmoser and Kahl were justifiably anxious prior to attempting the Northeast Ridge. Yet, to their surprise, they found the route enjoyable; even the rock quality was better than expected. "There was certainly no need to kick the air with your feet," Gmoser reported, in reference to Lewis's so-called "flesh-crawl technique."[99] "As a matter of fact I would have been a little concerned had I found myself in such a position and I am sure I am speaking for Heinz also in saying this."[100] Moreover, they found the climb itself to be quite short: only four pitches, which the climbers led alternately. Gmoser summarized their ascent by writing that the route "was not easy but neither does it take super human beings to climb it."[101]

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[97] Ibid.: 52.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Garner, "Conquering Brussels Peak": 26.

[100] Gmoser, "How Steep is Steep?": 54.

[101] Ibid.

Although an accepted authority in Canadian climbing circles by the early 1960s, Gmoser clearly remained opposed to the dominant establishment. For example, despite the prominent position of "How Steep is Steep" in the 1961 journal, the editorial staff deemed it necessary to interject the final word. In an "Editor's Note" that followed the essay, Paddy Sherman, the assistant editor, returned criticism by saying that Gmoser had "gone too far to the other extreme" and oversimplified the climb to the average mountaineer. "Assessment of rock routes is always subjective," Sherman told readers, "hence not entirely reliable unless you personally know the author's standard."[102] Ironically, Sherman's main criticism only stressed what Gmoser had long advocated, that is, the need for a standardized grading system, which, although not perfect, aimed to eliminate climbers' biased estimations of difficulty.

Sherman's cautionary rebuke revealed a distinctive shift in the balance of relations managing the form and meaning of mountaineering, at least in the Rockies. Both the ACC and its journal were the first of their kind in Canada. Partly because of this, and partly through the proficiency of its leading members and their prominence in the society from which they came, the nationally-affiliated club was undoubtedly the dominant force in most matters of mountaineering during the early years of the sport. They were undeniably specialists in what seemed to be a new and exhilarating pastime. It was inconceivable, however, that a climbing establishment formed by middle- to upper-class amateurs could be anything but reflective of a narrow stratum of the leisure classes. Sherman, for instance, argued on behalf of those club members who "reach the Rockies at most once a year" and "often don't want to climb the great faces or take the time to search out short routes where the rock was good."[103] In complete contrast, Gmoser was the spokesperson for a new and noticeably growing cohort of post-war climbers, who did not generally fit the mould of the dominant, middle- to upper-class mountaineer: "Those people don't stay at the CHATEAU [Lake Louise] or the JASPER PARK LODGE, some of them don't even have a tent," Gmoser wrote in 1958. "However unexperienced [*sic*], however poorly clad, however poorly equipped, they are not 'bums'! Here we have human beings fighting for the realization of their ideals, whether they are aware of it or not."[104]

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[102] P.L.S., "Editor's Note," *CAJ* 44 (1961): 54.

The manuscript from which these words were drawn remains unpublished. Whether Gmoser submitted it for consideration to the *CAJ* is unknown, although it is unlikely that, given the article's main thrust, the editorial board would have printed it. Titled "The Young Ones and the Old Ones," the essay articulated the growing tension and conflict within the ACC's membership itself, which, given the context of the period, reflects the larger social changes in postwar leisure trends:

> The ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA today cannot be satisfied with organizing social gatherings, weekend outings, a summer and winter camp, maintaining 9 huts, and publishing the ALPINE JOURNAL. The structure of the club membership has changed so much, that the club under its present constitution does much for one part of the membership and little or nothing for the others. What's worse, there are many climbers in Canada today who look down on the club, think it is silly and oldfashioned [*sic*] and don't want to join it. The ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA as such has a great obligation to all people of Canada, especially the young ones, and must realize its responsibility. We have to fight to establish ourselves as a national institution for the benefit of all people interested in the mountains, be it they pick flowers, scale the north face of Mt. Temple, ski the slopes of Mt. Norquay, or traverse the Columbia Icefield on skis. If the ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA fails to recognize this, we will very shortly have a number of small clubs....[105]

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Gmoser, "The Young Ones and the Old Ones": unpaginated.

Pushing the Limits

By the early 1960s, the ACC's declining power to represent the form and meaning of mountaineering in the Rockies was marked, as Gmoser had predicted, with the formation of an alternative climbing organization, the Calgary Mountain Club (CMC). Formed on July 8, 1960, the CMC began as a social club, more than anything. Developed from a small, summer sport's club organized and run by Ron "Alpine" Smylie, a local sporting-goods proprietor and climber, the early club had a distinct working-class, international flavour: "A lot of yodely [*sic*] stuff, sweaters, tea, and cookies in those years—very innocent, with a strong Austro-German presence," remembered Chic Scott, who, along with Don Gardner and Charlie Locke, was among the few home-grown Canadians in the early club.[106] Scott, who joined the CMC in 1962, had attended a meeting of the ACC's new "junior section," but, like many of his contemporaries, found the organization to be "out of touch" with current climbing trends: "I remember sitting there listening to a lecture from Bob Hind, and dammed if he wasn't wearing nailed boots! This was the SIXTIES! I don't remember anyone being unkind to us, but it was such a different place, really."[107]

The CMC's membership totalled forty-eight in its inaugural year, and steadily grew to exceed 100 by 1965; roughly thirty-five percent were women throughout this

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Chic Scott, personal communication, 27 Jan. 2006. The core of strong climbers in the early years of the CMC (1960-1965) included Brian Greenwood, Lloyd McKay, Don Vockeroth, Heinz Kahl, Gunti Prinz, Glen Boles, Franz Dopf, Deiter Raubach, Tim Mason, Dick Lofthouse, Lilo Schmid, and Inge Steinbach. Chic Scott, *The History of the Calgary Mountain Club: Its Members and its Activities, 1960-1986* (Calgary: unpublished manuscript, 1987), 5-6.

[107] Ibid.

period.[108] It had an elected president and vice-president, a slate of officers, and a full calendar of events, which included weekly meetings and slideshows, weekend outings to the mountains, a Christmas banquet, and the Annual Dinner and Dance, all of which were promoted in a monthly newsbulletin. The Sunwapta Giant Slalom Ski Race, held each year on the Victoria Day weekend at Parker Ridge, near the Columbia Icefield, was a particularly popular event during the club's early years.[109] Coffee, tea, and cookies were always served after the weekly Wednesday night meeting, which, originally held at Maccabees Hall on Fifth Avenue, typically featured either travel films provided by local tourism agencies or slideshows presented by club members. An especially exciting evening usually occurred in November, when local climbing celebrity Hans Gmoser screened one of his mountain films to a sold-out Calgary crowd at the Jubilee Auditorium.[110]

Over the next three decades, the vast majority of significant Canadian ascents in the Rockies were made by members of the CMC. By the early 1980s, for instance, its leading climbers were widely considered to be on the cutting edge of the international scene, putting up routes in the Rockies and beyond that, at that time, were some of the hardest in the world. "The Calgary Mountain Club was where it was all happening," one member recalled. "There was tons of energy there. People were going out and doing new stuff."[111]

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[108] I am grateful to Chic Scott for providing the early club records from which these statistics were drawn.

[109] Organized by the CMC, the Sunwapta Giant Slalom was first held in the spring of 1961. By 1963, the club's annual ski competition had attracted the best young skiers in Canada, including fifteen members from the Canadian National Ski Team. A year later, two-thousand spectators parked their cars along the Icefields Parkway and lined the race course. The race ran consecutively for eight years. See Scott, *Powder Pioneers*, 130-32; "Calgary Mountain Club, News Bulletin No. 3," May 1963; "Calgary Mountain Club, News Bulletin No. 12," 11 June 1964.

[110] Over a ten year period, beginning in 1957, Gmoser made ten feature-length films: *With Skis and Rope* (1957-58), *Vagabonds of the Mountains* (1959-60), *Of Skiers and Mountains* (1960-61), *Deep Powder and Steep Rock* (1961-62), *The Forbidden Snowfields* (1962-63), *Skis Over McKinley* (1963-64), *Adventure Bound* (1964-65), *Roving Skis* (1965-66), *The High Road to Skiing* (1966-67), and *Rendezvous in the Selkirks* (1967-68). Between the months of October and February, Gmoser presented his films throughout North America, always drawing capacity crowds. See Scott, *Powder Pioneers*, 122-24.

The articulation of the newly dominant "pushing the limits" discourse, in this instance, illustrates well the dynamic nature of domination itself; that is, when counter-models cast doubt on the balance of social order and threaten its legitimacy, the dominant order cannot remain fixed.[112] "But to reproduce itself," as sport sociologists Jean Harvey and Hart Cantelon have noted, "it must make a series of adjustments in response to the incessant struggles in which various social agents engage to institutionalize other possible models."[113] The influence of the shifting balance of power between social classes and groups cannot be absent from discussions concerning the history of mountaineering, particularly those focused on its mechanisms of production and reproduction. These power relations, and the social struggles they have created, as in all areas of social life, have played a central role in the evolution of the meaning, organization, and practice of mountaineering. When asked years later if they were aware, at the time, of the transformation they were initiating in the Rockies, Gmoser's old friend and climbing partner Franz Dopf replied: "We certainly didn't realize it at the time. We just climbed because we liked doing it."[114]

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[111] Quoted in Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 186.

[112] The phrase "pushing the limits" is Chic Scott's (2000).

[113] Jean Harvey and Hart Cantelon, "Historical Determinants of Contemporary Sports," *Not Just a Game*, ed. Harvey and Cantelon, 6.

[114] Qtd. in Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 168.

EPILOGUE

At the Foot of a Mountain

We have analyzed climbing long enough. I am going to throw a rope into my pack and head for the mountains. Care to join me?[1]

Chris Jones

"Writing about mountaineering history in the Rockies? Whatever for? Hasn't that already been done?" The question was recently put to me by a friend of some standing in local climbing circles. I was slightly taken aback, but happily replied: "Well, there's lots of different climbing histories, you know, not just the popular ones. I guess I've been interested in what made some ways of thinking and writing about mountaineering more legitimate than others." His dubious grin diverted me from the prescribed ritual of sizing up the route that rose before us. Another day in the Bow Valley.

"So, what, you've written about why people climbed? AND THEY'RE GOING TO GIVE YOU A DEGREE FOR THAT?"

"More about the contested meanings that different people have given to the endeavour," I replied, disregarding his last poke. "About how various ideas, concepts, and beliefs became established as knowledge or as the accepted world view at the expense of other investments.... Are you going to lead the first pitch?" That started him off on a passionate diatribe:

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[1] Jones, *Climbing in North America*, 354.

> I have to say that ultimately all this wordy bullshit has nothing to do with the essence of mountaineering that most mountaineers over the centuries have loved: the drama and intense concentration of all the senses as you fight your way up a pitch, where you know you will die if you fall off; the immense relief and pleasure that you feel as you and your mates huddle around a purring stove making tea; the excruciating pleasure and relief you feel after a long, hard, dry day when you finally get a drink of water. All of this is what climbing is about for most of us.

He then smiled, winked, and led off up the pitch. It seemed that we had come a long way from the romantic mountains of Elizabeth Parker.

The cultural industries governing the form and meaning of mountaineering continue to reshape and rework what they represent; they continue to impose and implant, through repetition and selection, particular definitions of ourselves and our activities that best suit the descriptions of the dominant or preferred culture. Cultural domination *does* have real effects, particularly in the way that it occupies and reworks the inner contradictions of feelings and perceptions in those who respond to them.[2] To say these imposed forms have no influence is tantamount to arguing that cultural collectives can somehow exist outside the larger field of social forces and relations, somewhere beyond the reach of cultural power. I don't believe that. I can think of too many instances when conflicting significations or discourses have shaped and structured, not just the way that climbers—myself included—personally think and write about climbing, but also the way that they *experience* the very activity itself, as well as the environment in which it takes place.[3]

To elaborate on this last remark, consider four very brief snapshots of the various ways by which the contradictory and conflicting tensions in popular mountaineering culture have been navigated. I have selected these particular moments of contradiction because, collectively, they might suggest, though in varying degrees, a practical consciousness—specific relationships, skills, and perceptions—that is unquestionably social, but that a current dominant social order neglects, excludes, represses, or, in some cases, simply fails to recognize.[4]

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[2] Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing," 233.

The first snapshot features a deeply revealing article, titled "Mountaineering and the Ethics of Technique" (1984), written by Bruce Fairley, an active climber and guidebook author from Golden, British Columbia. During the summer of 1983, Fairley, along with Vancouver-based climbers John Baldwin, Jean Heineman, and Rob Driscoll, undertook a traverse through an unfrequented section of the BC Coast Range. Unforeseen time constraints, which required that the group keep moving ultimately prevented them from embracing the technical challenges of the many peaks they "plodded" past. They did little actual climbing, "nothing whatsoever of a technical nature," Fairley noted. This apparent conundrum, for Fairley and Driscoll at least, called into question the very legitimacy of their trip. "One night we had a discussion," wrote Fairley,

> about those who love mountains versus those who love only climbing. The conversation induced a slight feeling of guilt in me. I wondered if I was worrying too much about achievement, losing the sense of beauty in the mountain environment through an obsession with technique.[5]

In the end, upon much candid reflection, Fairley resolved that "it yet remains possible to operate outside the basic assumptions of one's time and still achieve a rare and

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[3] Robbins, "Sport, Hegemony and the Middle Class": 587-88; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 128-35.

[4] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 125.

meaningful experience."[6] The article was printed in the 1984 *CAJ*, but appeared in the back pages under the uninteresting section heading "Miscellaneous." Occupying the issue's cover was a picture of Calgary climber and CMC-er Tim Friesen boldly leading the crux difficulty on the first ascent of what became known as the *Andromeda Strain*, one of the Rockies' rarely repeated *grand cours* routes, up the Northeast Face of Mount Andromeda (see Fig. 26). It is virtually the same image that adorns the cover of Sean Dougherty's guidebook, *Selected Alpine Climbs of the Canadian Rockies* (1991).

The second snapshot comes from 1988, and features the reconciliation of the death of Dave Cheesmond—a leading proponent and catalyst in the CMC during the 1980s—among a tight-knit circle of hard-core Calgary alpinists. "It's all good training man," he would say, wrote Tony Dick, Cheesmond's friend and frequent climbing partner:

> He trained alone on the Cassin Ridge on McKinley, then he trained up the Emperor Face of Mount Robson, up Mount Deborah, the East Face of Assiniboine and on the North Twin. He didn't stop for the winter because all the waterfalls froze up for training on. When the spring came he was ready for it; in the Rockies, in the Bugaboos, in Yosemite, and eventually the Himalayas. When he went to Rakaposhi, the weather didn't leave time for anything but training. So he trained all the way up the North Face.[7]

Many of these committing routes remain unrepeated. They are celebrated in climbing's literature, time and again, for the "impeccable style" by which they were ascended. In a touching obituary titled "A Letter to a Friend," Barry Blanchard, one of Cheesmond's closest "Wildboys," wished he and Dave had, instead,

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[5] Bruce Fairley, "Mountaineering and the Ethics of Techniques": 49.

[6] Ibid.: 52.

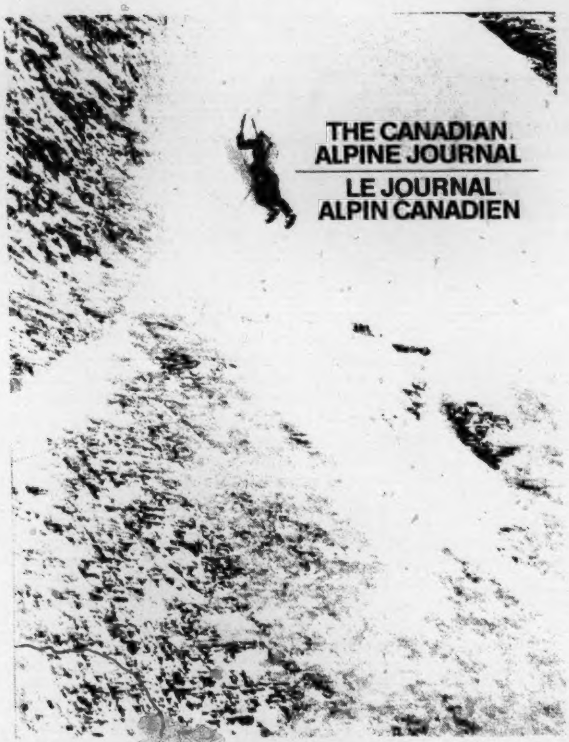

Fig. 26 The front cover of *CAJ* 67 (1984). The photograph is Dave Cheesmond's, taken during the route's first ascent, which Cheesmond, Friesen, and Barry Blanchard completed over two days in April, 1983.

> chosen to become painters or musicians. Something less lethal.... I do know we have been guilty of ignoring our mortality. We laughed off 'the close ones.' It's a bit of a trap. We got into it so far we lost our perspective. It always happened to someone else. Maybe they made a mistake. The mistake is forgetting you are dancing with death. All the joy and growing we got out of it was only in us. The mountain moved and you were in the way.[8]

Blanchard ultimately reconciled the unspoken inevitability of pushing the limits as life giving: "I understand now," he wrote. "I know you had to keep on climbing and that I too have to keep on climbing. The alternative is a slow death from boredom.... You

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[7] Tony Dick, "David Cheesmond," *Alpinism* 1 (1988): 33.

[8] Barry Blanchard, "A Letter to a Friend," *CAJ* 71 (1988): 52.

died alive; like people are supposed to be alive."[9] Tony Dick reached a slightly different conclusion: "… I began to realize that those guys who keep training like that are totally different. They've never really questioned it and they never will. Dave was going to keep on training even if he trained right off the edge. You'll never forget it if you've known someone like that."[10]

The third snapshot comes from the early spring of 2005, and begins with a conversation among three friends and myself, held somewhere high on the densely-forested slopes above Clemenceau Creek, a small glacier-fed tributary that flows south-to-north between the Clemenceau and Hooker icefields. It was the eighth day of what was planned to be a twenty-one-day outing, and we still had more than 220 kilometres remaining in a high-level ski traverse that connected all the major icefields that straddle the Continental Divide between Jasper and Lake Louise. Bent under heavy packs, we were mired down in the thick trees. Our progress slowed almost to a standstill. As we took refuge in a small clearing to brew warm drinks, my friends, sitting on their packs in the wet snow, launched into a lively debate over the subtle differences between 5.13a and 5.13b, incredibly difficult rock-climbing grades that most climbers only ever aspire to reach. The scene was wonderfully bizarre. I've often thought back to that conversation in the woods and wondered if our circumstances had somehow evoked the need to reaffirm to ourselves just what it was to be a climber: "So this is what happens when climbers go ski touring," I remember thinking.

Upon the trip's conclusion twenty days later, aside from notifying the local guidebook author of the bolts we had fixed on the route's two technical rappels, we didn't think to write anything up: it wasn't as if we were the first to complete the traverse. Perhaps we were the sixth or seventh. Somehow *that* mattered to us. When asked about the trip, we're still quick to sum it all up as a painful lesson in bushwhacking, always withholding some Great Unspoken behind knowing smiles. The tribal lexicon of climbers. My friends still laugh and call it the "DEATH SLOG." What is less often expressed is that the trip remains one of the greatest adventures of our lives.

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[9] Ibid.

The fourth and final snapshot features Grassi Lakes, a popular sport-climbing crag tucked in below Whiteman's Gap, which, nestled between mounts Lawrence Grassi and Rundle, separates the Bow and Spray River valleys overlooking Canmore, Alberta. The area has been a favourite of locals and tourists for decades. Interpretive signage along the lower trail, which leads up to the two small lakes just below the crag, point out various geological and historical features of the Bow Valley, detailing, for example, the life of Lawrence Grassi, who built the trail in the early 1920s. Perhaps it's because most climbers use the upper trail to access the crag—thus missing the tourist signage—that, after years of climbing at "Grassi," I only recently noticed the Aboriginal pictographs adorning a large slab of limestone beside the path in the middle of the upper crag (see Fig. 27). To me, the find was remarkably *startling*, but not because I didn't already recognize a rich indigenous presence and history in the area. To the contrary, I've always held a deep personal interest in the various cultural histories of Rockies, their vitality and moments of contact and exchange. But so seldom is an Aboriginal presence signified within popular mountaineering culture that the images on the rock seemed somewhat

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[10] Dick, "David Cheesmond": 33.

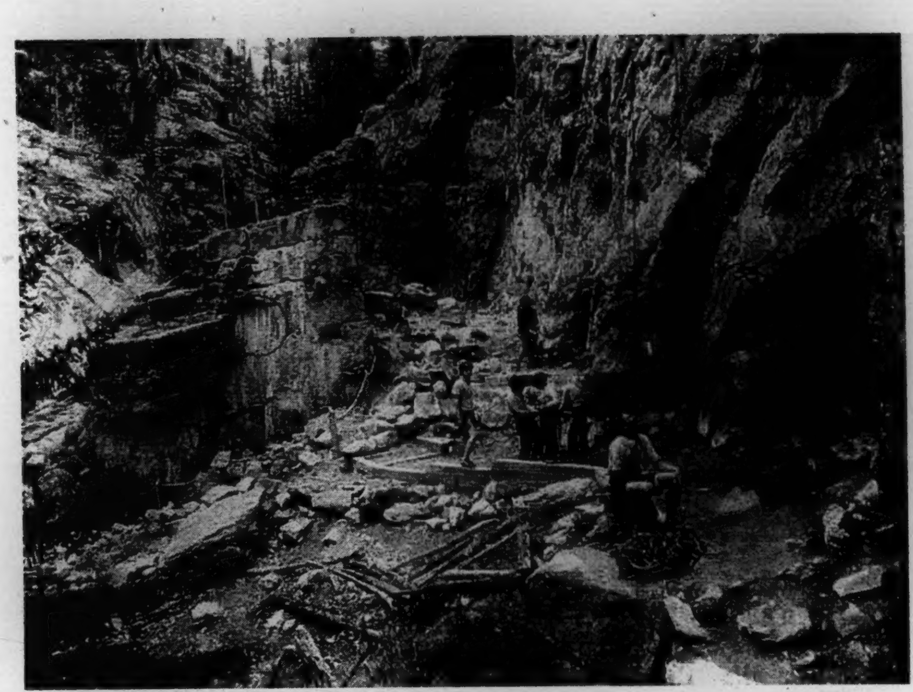

Fig. 27 Author. Climbers at Grassi Lakes. The pictographs (circled) adorn the large limestone slab left of centre. August, 2006.

out of place, foreign, and illogical. The enduring presence of these images in the crag, amid the myriad of other significations meaningful to climbers, stunningly punctuated, in my mind at least, a long-standing complacency among mountaineers that depends on the Rockies as being "ours." They might just be someone else's "sacred mountains," as well (see Fig. 28).[11] During the summer of 2003, in a well-intentioned effort to protect the pictographs, volunteers of the Association of Bow Valley Rock Climbers (TABVAR) installed four posts and an interpretive plaque at the base of the painted rock. A chain was added during the summer of 2006.

"Writing about mountaineering history in the Rockies? Whatever for?" History and tradition have always functioned as a vital part of the dominant culture of

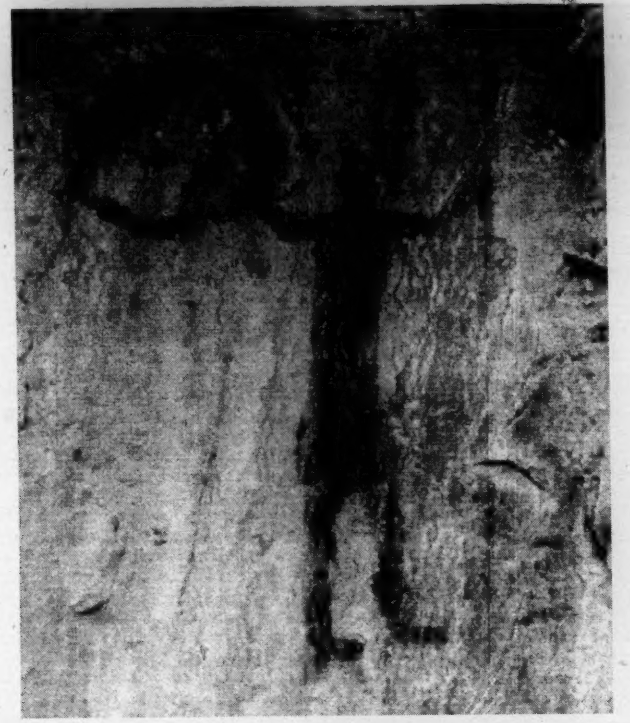

Fig. 28 Author. Pictograph at Grassi Lakes. Photograph August, 2006.

mountaineering. Climbers in the Rockies, perhaps, nod their heads. Their history illustrates something that many take sincerely. In the introduction to *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering* (2000), Chic Scott summed it up in this way: "Canadian climbing is based on three pillars," he wrote, "a tradition of modesty and understatement inherited from our British roots, a tradition of skill and competence inherited from the Swiss and Austrian guides, and a tremendous respect for the mountains as wilderness."[12] Cultural theorists and historians have challenged us, however, to think again about this tricky term in popular culture, "tradition," and recognize that it has little

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[11] Chief John Snow, *These Mountains are Our Sacred Places: The Story of the Stoney People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

[12] Scott, *Pushing the Limits*, 29.

to do with the mere persistence of older cultural forms and ways of life.[13] It has much more to do with the way that various elements are actively arranged and rearranged, so that they articulate with different practices and positions, and take on new meaning and significance. Cultural struggle arises in its sharpest form, time and again, just at the point where different, opposed traditions intersect. The idea that certain forms of sporting practice have naturally faded into disuse in the face of modernization disabuses us of the fact that these forms have been actively marginalized, pushed aside to the cultural periphery. But if we accept the premise that all human activities occur within, are shaped by, and respond to larger cultural currents and trends, it may be a mistake to forget that mountaineering is neither more nor less pure than it ever has been.

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[13] Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the 'Popular,'" 236; Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

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